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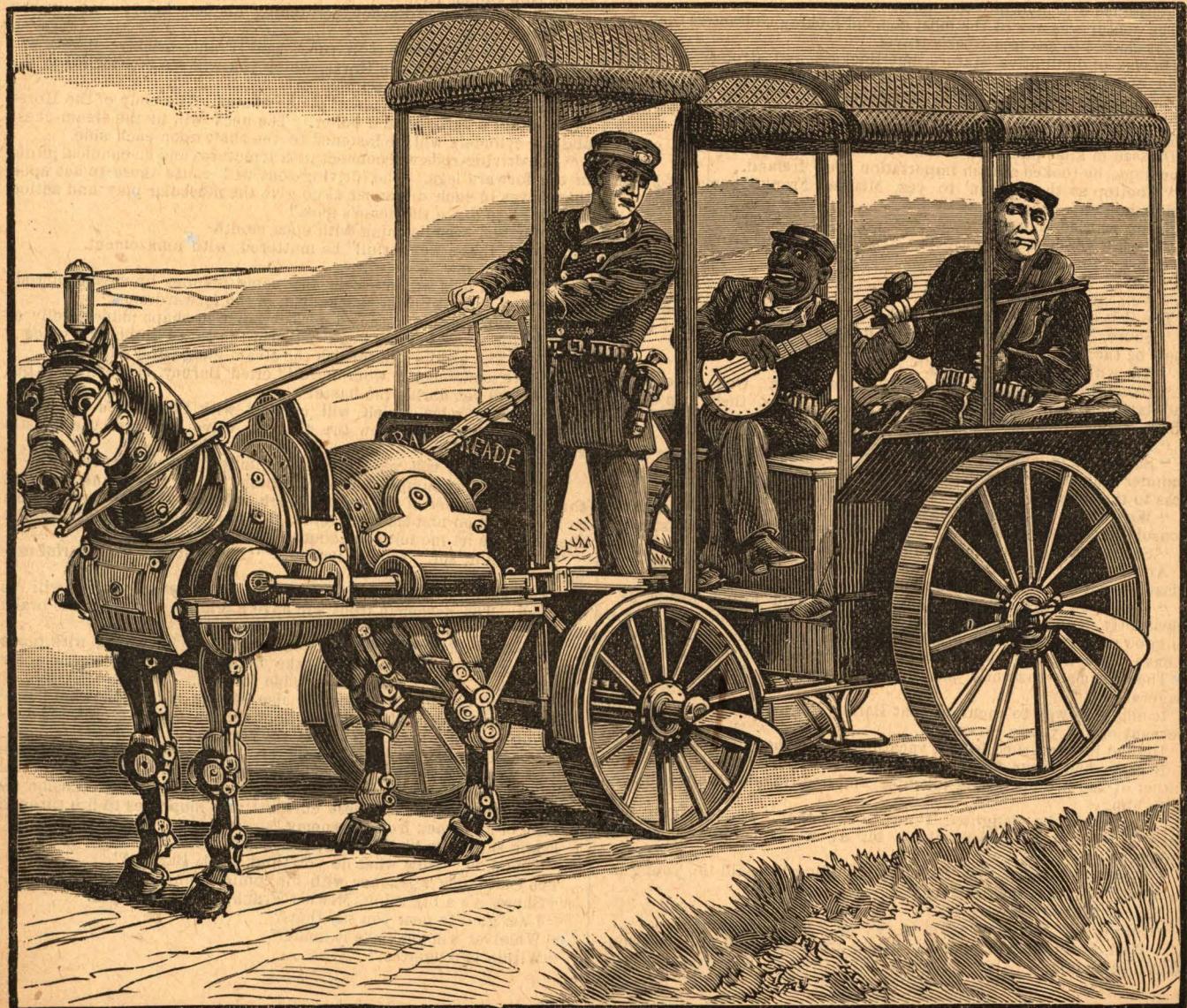
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Frank Reade, Jr., AND HIS NEW STEAM HORSE: Or, THE SEARCH FOR A MILLION DOLLARS.

By "NONAME."



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FRANK READE, JR., AND HIS NEW STEAM HORSE;

OR,

THE SEARCH FOR A MILLION DOLLARS.

A Story of Wild Life in New Mexico.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His New Steam Man Chasing a Gang of 'Rustlers,'" etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW INVENTION.

FRANK READE, JR., the prince of inventors, sat at a large table one day in the office of his extensive machine shops, which had been built for the exclusive manufacture of his own inventions.

Upon the table was a pile of papers, covered with drawings and hieroglyphic notes, which were comprehensive to the inventor alone.

"There," said the famous young inventor, with a light of joy in his handsome eyes. "Now I believe I have drawn every detail, and all that I need do now is to have the parts made and put together."

So engrossed had Frank been in his work that he had not noticed the entrance of a man into the room.

The visitor was one of the most comical looking characters that one might chance to see in a week's travel.

He was of diminutive stature, but thickset and strong. A large head, covered with a shock of red hair, sat upon his shoulders.

His features were of the ultra Hibernian type, with flat nose, heavy brows, deep upper lip, and high cheek bones. An Irishman he was beyond all peradventure.

Dressed in knee-pants of corduroy, with velvet jacket and green stockings, he looked a fresh importation from Ireland.

"The top av the mornin' to yez, Misther Frank!" exclaimed the visitor in a rich brogue.

Frank whirled about.

"Barney O'Shea!" he gasped. "Well, I'm glad to see you. So you have returned safely from your trip to Ireland?"

"I have that, sor."

"Well, how did you make it?"

The Celt elevated his chin and took a strutting walk across the floor.

"Shure, Misther Frank, av Ireland was only free onct more I think she'd be the foolest countrry in all the worruld."

"Ah, with America excepted."

"Exceptin' no countrry, sor, mark me worruds. Och hone, it's a sad day for Ireland whin thim bloody Britishers got their grip on it.

Shure, I looked in vain fer the castle av me ancisters, the Borus."

"And couldn't you find it?" asked Frank, with a smile.

"Shure, an' indade not. I heerd that they had moved it over for a summer palace for her highness, Queen Victoria, in England, bad cess to the thieves av Britishers."

"Well, that's a sad case," agreed Frank. "I suppose it was some consolation to go and look at the ground where it had formerly stood."

"Shure, sor, that was only pain for me, I kin tell ye."

And Barney O'Shea had recourse to a green silk kerchief, all emblazoned with harps and little cherubs.

"Well, you have my sympathy, Barney," said Frank Reade, Jr., pleasantly, "and I'm glad you've got home safely. You have come in good time, for I have a great scheme on hand at present. In fact, I have just completed the drawings for the greatest invention yet."

The Irishman instantly put up his handkerchief and became all eagerness.

It might be well to mention that Barney O'Shea was a very faithful servant of the young inventor.

He had just returned from a vacation trip to the "ould sod."

Barney had been for many years with Frank Reade, Sr., the father of the present young inventor, and had traveled the world over with him.

"Shure, sor, its delighted I am to hear that," cried the Celt, joyously. "Shure, I feel jist loike a bit av a thrip wid yez, Misther Frank."

"First let me show you what my invention is," said the young inventor. "Here is the drawing."

Barney rubbed his eyes.

"Shure, sor, that's not plain to me, sor," he blurted forth.

"Well, I will make it plainer. There are the lines of my most wonderful invention."

"Shure, an' phwat kind av a baste may it be?"

"It is the New Steam Horse."

Barney gave a leap in the air.

"The Shame Horse!" he shouted. "Shure, an' phwat put that in ter yer head, Misther Frank? I thought shure yez wud reconstruc the wonderful New Steam Man."

"At first I had thought of it," declared Frank, "but on second thought I decided to start a new scheme. You remember well the Steam Horse once invented by my father?"

"Shure, didn't I take a thrip over the plains wid him an' it?"

"Of course you did. Well, this Steam Horse is a great improvement upon the original. It is truly the best and most wonderful yet, is the New Steam Horse."

"Yis, sor," agreed Barney, scratching his fiery head; "av yez say so, it must be so."

"Now, I will describe it to you," said Frank, briskly; "here you see are the outlines of the Horse, which you will see is attached to the shafts of a four-wheeled wagon."

"The Horse is to be made of plates of steel. The body of the Horse will contain a furnace and boiler. The neck will be the steam-chest and the cylinders will be fastened to the shaft upon each side."

"The driving-rods will connect with armatures and mechanical joints in the forward legs. The driving-rods will cause these to act upon themselves in such a manner as to give the muscular play and action necessary to make the horse's gait."

Barney had been listening with open mouth.

"Shure, that's wonderful!" he muttered, with amazement.

Frank went on.

"The hind legs will move in the same manner by means of rods connecting them with the mechanism of the forward ones."

"You will see that here is a perfect horse in shape made wholly of steel. Upon the horse's head between the ears I intend to place a whistle. The saddle will furnish the steam gauge and indicator."

"Shure, sor, but it's wondherful!" cried Barney, earnestly. "But however will yez dhrive the baste?"

"By these reins which will connect with the horse's lower jaw and by pressure act upon the throttle valve and also the whistle valve."

"But however will yez stheer the animile?" asked Barney.

"That is very simple," replied Frank. "By this crank and rod through the dasher of the wagon which will turn the forward wheels in any direction and also the Horse. But now that I have described the Steam Horse let me tell you about the wagon."

"All roight, sor," replied Barney. "Shure it's a wondherful machine."

"The wagon will have four wheels, the tires of which will be grooved. The dasher in front will have a crank and rod for the brake and steering gear."

"The body of the wagon will contain a tank for water, with pipes extending through the shafts to the boiler. Also a receptacle for coal or wood, or any material suitable for fuel."

"On each side of the wagon are also lockers above the coal bunkers for the storage of weapons, ammunition tools, stores, or anything needed on a long trip across the country."

"So much for the body of the wagon. Now over the wagon there will be a trap with four grooved standards. Curtains of finest steel plates and bullet-proof are made to pull up or down as occasion requires, on all sides. In these curtains are loopholes to fire through in case of an attack from an enemy."

Frank sank into his chair as he finished, and said:

"That's all. Now what do you think of it, Barney?"

The Celt made a grimace with his comical mug, and replied:

"Shure, it's a big thing, Misther Frank, an' I'm wid yez."

"I am glad to hear you say that."

"Whiniver will yez have it made?"

"Within two months."

"Och hone, but whativer will ye do wid it?"

"We will take a trip in it to the far West."

"Phwat will we do out there, sor?"

"I'll risk but what we will find enough to do, once we get out there," said Frank. "Perhaps we can rescue some beautiful young girl from the Indians. See?"

"Barney O'Shea's wid yez."

"All right. Good for you, Barney. Now you are ready for work?"

"Yis, sor."

Frank picked up his plans, and arranging them, said:

"You will oblige me by stepping down to the yard and telling Mr. MacPherson, the master mechanic, to come up here."

"All right, sor."

A few moments later the famous Scotch machinist was closeted with Frank Reade, Jr.

A day or two later a vague report leaked out that Frank Reade, Jr., was at work upon some wonderful new invention.

Just what this was nobody could guess.

But two months later, as Frank had predicted, the New Steam Horse stood finished and complete.

A few of Frank's intimate friends were admitted to see the wonderful invention.

All pronounced it the wonder of modern times.

Among the visitors was a dangerous crank who tried to ascertain the secret of the invention.

He carried a dynamite cartridge and might have done it harm had not Frank caused his arrest.

The New Steam Horse was a credit to Frank Reade, Jr.'s working force of mechanics.

It was all ready for a trip and Frank was ready also.

The rumor was circulated that the Steam Horse was to start for the Northwest on an Indian trailing expedition.

But at the last moment a thrilling series of incidents occurred which gave Frank an object to pursue.

Colleague of Barney's and an old servant of the Reades' was a negro named Pomp.

Pomp was certainly a unique sort of a character.

He was short of stature and thick-set, with a genuine African type of countenance.

But Pomp was as faithful as he was homely and much devoted to Frank Reade, Jr. Like Barney he was always a companion of the young inventor in all his travels,

One day Pomp was just entering the yard of the Reade Iron Works when he was accosted by a mysterious-looking stranger.

"Look here, my man," he said, in a low tone, "ain't your name Pomp?"

"Dat am a fac', sah."

"And you work for Frank Reade, Jr.?"

"Bet yo' life I does."

"Good enough! Now I want to see your master."

"Yo' wants to see Marse Frank?"

"Yes."

"Well," sniffed Pomp, suspiciously, "why don' yo' jes' go right along up to his house and speak to him like a man, sah?"

CHAPTER II.

THE DETECTIVE'S STORY.

The stranger shrugged his shoulders.

"There is a reason for that," he made reply, doggedly.

"Sah!" exclaimed Pomp.

"I say I have a reason for not."

"What am it, sah?"

"Can I trust you?"

"Well, sah, yo' can if yo' wants to."

The fellow hesitated a moment.

"Well," he said, finally, "the reason I don't go up to the house is because it is shadowed by detectives."

Pomp was dumfounded.

"Shadowed by detectives, sah? Did yo' say dat fing, sah?"

"I did."

"What yo' mean by it?"

The fellow pulled a newspaper from his pocket and handed it to Pomp.

"No doubt you have read of that affair," he said, indicating a paragraph with black headlines.

"Deed and I has, sah!" said Pomp, as he read the article.

The article was several months old and described an affair which had created a tremendous sensation throughout the country.

Thus it read:

"Further particulars of the daring robbery of a million dollars in gold and currency from the car of the Texas Express Company, at Hard Pan station, on the M., N. & T. Railroad. Latest report has it that the train was slowing up at Hard Pan, when Conductor Lewis went into the express car."

To his surprise he saw Express Clerk David Mayhew sitting in a chair to which he was tightly bound with ropes.

Upon the car floor lay the dead body of Messenger Clark, with a bullet in his brain. The safe door was open, and in the car door stood a masked man, who leaped as the train slowed up and disappeared in the darkness.

The train stopped a moment later, and a tremendous sensation was created when it was learned that the small iron chest containing the fortune of a million dollars was gone.

"Clerk Mayhew was liberated and told a thrilling tale.

"He says that as himself and Clark were busy at the desk, both turned, to be suddenly confronted by two men with revolvers. Both wore black masks."

"Mayhew surrendered, but Clark made a fight and was shot. Then the robbers seized the chest containing the million dollars, which was very heavy, dragged it to the car door, and at a certain point threw it out into the darkness."

"Then one of the men removed his mask and went back into the train. The other leaped from the car as Conductor Lewis entered."

"At once the train ran back down the line, and a search was made for the chest of treasure and the robbers."

"But not a sign of them could be seen anywhere. It was evident that the robbers knew at what point to drop the treasure off, and that they had confederates there in waiting."

"That the treasure will ever be recovered is doubtful. It is believed that Duncan Darke, the noted bandit of upper Texas, is the leader of the gang. Detectives are working upon the case, and it has even been reported that Frank Reade, Jr., the world famous inventor of the Steam Man, would take the case in hand for the express company. Great excitement is extant over the affair."

Pomp's eyes bulged as he read this latter statement.

"Well, did yo' eber hear de like ob dat?" he spluttered. "Dat reporter had a jolly bit ob gall fo' to mix Marse Frank's name up with the thing."

"Ah, then Mr. Reade has no idea of going?" asked the fellow, eagerly.

"Ob course he don'. Moreover, de Steam Man am broke all up into lily bits ob pieces."

"But has he not invented a Steam Horse?"

"To be sho', sah!"

"Well, mebbe it's that, then. Are you sure that he don't intend going on a search for a million dollars?"

"Ob co'se I is."

"Well, that's queer. At any rate, it is the general belief that he intends doing so. In fact, that is why so many detectives are shadowing him and his house. It is their idea to follow him up and get some sort of a clew to the whereabouts of the robbers, and go in and win the reward."

"De debbil yo' say!" gasped Pomp. "I should fink dat dey would do better fo' to go right out an hunt fo' de thieves, an' not trouble 'bout Marse Frank an' his plans."

"Oh, well, it is only the snide detectives who are doing this. They haven't got the ability to get a clew in any other way."

"Huh! don' fink much ob dem kind."

"Neither do I. Now I am a detective myself, but I am not here to shadow this place, but to see Frank Reade, Jr., upon very important business. However, I don't want these other detectives to see me."

"Yas, sah," said Pomp, slowly. "What am yo' name?"

"My name is Dan Burton."

Pomp studied the fellow's face a moment and then said:

"If yo' will wait a moment, sah, I fink I can find Marse Reade."

"All right."

Pomp vanished into a side room. It was not long before he reappeared.

"Marse Frank am in de designin' room," he declared. "He says he will see yo' in dar."

Burton, the detective, followed Pomp through the inner building to a room in one corner where Frank at a table sometimes worked at his designing.

The young inventor sprang up as his visitor entered.

Burton advanced and introduced himself, shaking hands warmly with Frank.

He stated the facts in the case to Frank just as he had to Pomp. The famous inventor listened with interest.

"I have read an account of this affair," he declared, "but why should it specially interest me? The newspapers are filled with accounts of a like sort."

"Very true," said Burton, quietly, "but I think you will be interested when I have explained the matter more fully."

"I don't believe it," said Frank, positively. "Why are these detectives shadowing me and my house?"

"With the foolish hope that they will be able to fathom your plans in case you did make an attempt to recover the million dollars lost."

"Well, they are wasting time here," declared Frank. "I have no idea of going in quest of the lost million."

"You have not?"

"No, sir."

Burton smiled in a curious manner.

"I think I can show you something that will induce you to go," he said.

"I think not, sir."

"A very large reward is offered for the capture of the robbers. One hundred thousand dollars will be paid."

"I care nothing for that," said Frank. "Let us drop the subject here."

"One moment."

"Well?"

"Did you ever meet a man named David Mayhew?"

Frank looked interrogatively at Burton.

"What?" he gasped. "Not Dave Mayhew, of Silver Creek, New Mexico?"

"The same."

"Why, he saved my life once when I was sinking in a quicksand. I shall never forget him."

"I thought not. Well, this same express clerk is the same Dave Mayhew, of Silver Creek."

"Ah, but he is implicated in no way with the robbers."

"Of course not. Yet suspicion is upon him, and he has been arrested."

Frank was astonished.

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do. In the lawless country where he is held, such a theft is held punishable by death."

Frank sprang to his feet.

"Never!" he cried, "they shall not harm a hair of Dave Mayhew's head. Why, I owe my life to that lad."

"I knew that you would not refuse to help him," said Burton, quietly.

"Did he send you to me?"

"Yes."

"What can I do for him?"

"If you can find the million dollars stolen and capture the thieves you will clear him of suspicion and win his release from prison; ay, save his life."

"I will retract my statement of a few moments ago," cried Frank, forcefully. "I will certainly go to the aid of Dave Mayhew. Yes, and at once. Before I return to Readestown I will have recovered that money and captured the thieves or forfeit my life."

Frank touched an electric bell.

Pomp appeared at once.

"Pomp!" he said, authoritatively, "get the Steam Horse in readiness. Have stores and ammunition on hand and pack the machine in sections to be shipped to-night to New Mexico."

"A'right, sah."

Pomp disappeared with this. Burton was much excited.

"Then you undertake the mission, Mr. Reade?" he cried.

"I do," replied Frank.

"God bless you! You will save Dave's life. I would ask a favor."

"What?"

"That I may be one of your party."

Frank shook his head.

"I am obliged to decline, sir," he said. "Barney and Pomp are my only traveling companions on this trip."

"Well," said Burton, the detective, arising, "I have fulfilled one part of my mission. Now for the other part."

"What is that?"

"I am going to New Mexico by first train to work the case up on my own hook. If I cannot go with you, I can at least go alone. I mean to win that big reward if I can."

"I wish you success!"

"Thank you! Perhaps we may meet in the far West."

"I hope so!"

"Good-day!"

The door closed and Burton was gone. From that moment Frank was busy preparing for his trip west.

There was much to do. The exciting rumor of the proposed trip with the Steam Horse went out and all Readestown was on the qui vive of excitement.

The workmen quickly packed the different sections of the Steam Horse in a special car.

Then a special locomotive was chartered to take the train through to New Mexico.

A great crowd gathered at the depot to see Frank off.

Barney and Pomp were there, all equipped and ready for the trip. The excitement was most tremendous.

It was known that Frank's trip was one of philanthropic sort, and that it was also connected with the million dollar train robbery.

That he should go unhesitatingly to the relief of a friend in trouble was characteristic of Frank Reade, Jr.

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked, tersely. "Is it not an obligation? Don't I owe my life to Dave Mayhew? I mean to save him and bring the guilty parties to justice."

Thus was Frank Reade, Jr., given a mission to perform with his wonderful invention, the New Steam Horse.

The special train was quickly on its way to New Mexico. But all this while prying eyes and lurking foes had been at work in Readestown, and the trip of the New Steam Horse and its young inventor to New Mexico was to be not unattended with frightful risk and peril.

CHAPTER III. THE COMANCHES.

CRACK!

It was the sharp report of a rifle which smote upon the air of the New Mexico desert.

About as far as the eye could reach, nought but a level expanse of plain was in view, save just in what seemed the center there was a clump of cactus.

Not fifty yards from this clump of cacti the Steam Horse had just come to a halt.

For a month the Steam Horse, with Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp in the wagon had been traversing the Western wilds.

Crossing this expanse of the desert they had come to the clump of cactus.

They were really looking for water.

Many of the cacti of a certain species are reservoirs of cool, pure water.

Knowing this, Frank had sought the cactus clump, for there was no sign of water elsewhere on the plain.

But just as the Steam Horse, driven by Barney, was about to come to a halt, there was a puff of smoke, the sharp report of a rifle and a bullet struck the metal side of the wagon.

Pomp had been at the door of the wagon and was about to leap out.

But he checked himself and with surprise cried:

"Golly sakes! I done fink dis chile had a narrow escape dat time. Dar's somebody wif a good eye in dat ar place."

"Begorra, that's roight!" cried Barney, in amazement. "Phwatter does that mane, anyway? Shure, phwere is the spalpeen?"

"Steady!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., as he scrutinized the cactus clump. "Keep your eyes peeled, boys."

The young inventor knew well the risk he was incurring at that moment.

If the cactus clump held a horde of savage Comanches, there was much danger that they would surround the Steam Horse.

That they might do harm to the Horse was certain.

A blow of one of their hatchets at the steam gauge or indicator might ruin the invention.

In this lonesome place there would be no way of repairing the machine, and nobody knew this better than Frank Reade, Jr.

Of course, the Horse could easily run away from the ponies of the Comanches, but an encounter at close quarters was one to be dreaded and avoided.

So Frank was wary in approaching the cactus clump.

Again, he had no means of knowing whether the occupant of the clump was really friend or foe.

At sight of such an unusual article as the New Steam Horse in that out-of-the-way part of the world, a man, though a friend, might get rattled and fire.

So Frank decided to first ascertain, if possible, whether the owner of the rifle was a foe or not.

He went to one of the loopholes in the iron shield of the wagon and shouted:

"Halloo, the cactus clump!"

Again he shouted:

"Halloo!"

This time an answer came back.

"Hello!"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Bill Jackson, a cowboy."

"Friend or foe?"

"I dunno! Who the devil are you and what kind of a hitch have you got there anyway?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., and this is the Steam Horse."

"The Steam Hoss? Who in thunder ever heard of such a thing? But that's what it is, sartin. Glad to see ye, friend."

A man stepped out into view.

He was a genuine type of the western cowboy, with buckskin leggings, broad sombrero, and a rifle in his hands.

Over one arm he held the long bridle rein of a sleepy-looking mustang.

Frank saw at once that he had nothing to fear from this man.

At once he opened the door of the wagon and stepped out.

Bill Jackson stood gazing at the Steam Horse with mouth agape.

"Well, I never!" he muttered; "this beats anything I ever seen afore. Gosh all Jiminey! I've seen steam ingines, but I never seen a hoss afore that goes by steam."

"Well, you see it now, my friend," laughed Frank. "Wonders will never cease, you know."

"Wail, I swan! I reckon you're right. But it's a powerful curious masheen."

"I suppose you are an old timer hereabouts?" asked Frank.

"Wall, I've trapped beaver in Montana, dug gold in Nevada, and now I'm down hyar for nigh onto forty years, a-gallopin' over ther range with ther youngest of 'em. An' I don't take a setback from nobody at roundin' up a herd of cattle."

"Good for you," said Frank, heartily. "Well, then, perhaps you can tell me something about a man in these parts known as Duncan Darke?"

The cowboy gave a violent start.

He bent a penetrating glance upon Frank and in a peculiar tone he replied:

"Straunger, there ain't a better known man in ther Southwest than Dun' Darke."

"Ah!" said Frank, carelessly, "what is his business?"

"His bizness?"

Jackson looked at Frank as if he could not believe him in earnest.

"Yes."

Frank gazed steadily at the fellow.

"Wall, I swan! What have you bin all yure life, straunger, that you don't know that Dun' Darke is ther wust train robber in America?"

"Train robber, eh?" said Frank, coolly. "Well, I did hear something of the kind."

"Wall, you bet. He's a bad man is Dun' Darke."

"Do you recall a peculiar train robbery on the M. N. & T. some while ago? It was reported that a million dollars was stolen."

Jackson gave a low whistle.

"In course I do," he replied. "So that's what ye're out here for, straunger. Wall, let me give ye a pinter."

"What is it?"

"Dun' Darke is a bad man to fool with."

"Ah! then you are of the same opinion as myself that Darke was at the bottom of the deal?"

Jackson nodded his head.

"You bet!" he replied, "but just the same Dun Darke never got that million."

Frank was astonished.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just what I say."

"Why did not Darke get the million?"

"Bekase he didn't. When that box was thrown out of the window or door of the car his men didn't get it."

"Really?"

"It's the truth."

"How did you learn that?"

Jackson appeared for a moment confused but quickly recovered himself.

"Wall, you see, a friend of mine knew a chap that belonged to the gang. This feller said that Darke had his trouble for his pains. He didn't find the box with the million in it."

Frank was somewhat set back by this announcement.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "That was pretty rough on Darke, wasn't it?"

"Rayther!" rejoined Jackson.

"Where is the million?"

"Nobody knows."

"It was certainly thrown out of the car door, was it not?"

"In course!"

"Well, then, it must have struck the ground by the railroad track."

"Cert."

"Why, then, would it not be found by the track where it fell?"

"Kain't say, straunger. Sartin sure it wasn't ever found, an' there's a good haul fer ther man what finds it."

"Well, that is very strange," said Frank, in surprise; "that box of money could not take legs and walk off."

"I should say not."

"Then you believe that Dun Darke knows nothing about it?"

"Sartin I do."

"One more question!"

"Wall?"

"Do you knew where I would be likely to find Mr. Darke?"

Jackson looked doubtful.

"That's hard to tell," he muttered. "Thar's a place in the Panther Hills, up here, where Dun goes pooto often. I reckon it's some kind of a rendyvoo in the mountings where he meets all his pals."

"But his regular stopping place—"

"Bless ye, he ain't got any. He's a bird of the air, an' flies about everywhere. Ye're likely to meet him anywhere."

Frank extended his hand.

"Mr. Jackson," he said, "I am glad to have met you."

"The same, capen!"

"I hope to see you again."

"The same, capen."

Frank turned and sprang into the wagon. The cowboy was in the saddle and riding away across the prairie.

Frank drew out a note-book and began to jot down an accurate memoranda of the affair.

Barney and Pomp procured some water in the clump of cacti.

This done, a start was made, and the cacti clump left behind.

But the Steam Horse had not got far out upon the prairie, when a startled cry escaped Pomp's lips.

"Golly fo' goodness!" he cried, wildly. "Would yo' jes' look at dat, Marse Frank?"

Frank did look, and beheld a thrilling sight.

Jackson, the cowboy, was madly galloping toward the cacti clump, pursued by a horde of Comanches.

Where the savages had come from was a mystery.

But the situation was plainly a desperate one.

Unless Jackson reached the cactus clump, the Comanches would be sure to overtake him, and it was not impossible that they would kill him.

There was no time to lose.

Frank brought the Steam Horse about, and Barney and Pomp made ready to use their rifles.

Taking aim through the loopholes in the metal sides of the wagon, they both fired.

Two of the Comanches dropped from their ponies.

The others drew rein and gazed at the Steam Horse with utter horror and great amazement.

As the giant steed came down upon them with thunderous tread they broke ranks wildly and fled.

Frank sent the Horse after them at full speed, and Barney and Pomp worked their repeaters.

The effect was most terrific.

The Comanches separated and fled in all directions. One after another dropped beneath the deadly fire of the rifles.

Their terror, however, began to diminish as they saw, after closer scrutiny, what manner of monster was after them.

They saw Frank at the dasher, and realized that this was only some wonderful trick of the paleface foe.

They had often seen the iron horse of the railroads, but this exact representation of the equine animal was something strange to them.

But at sight of a white man in the wagon, their fears, at least in a superstitious way, were overcome.

They suddenly swerved to the right and essayed to dodge the Steam Horse.

CHAPTER IV.

ON TO THE HILLS.

FRANK READE, JR., saw their game just in time to frustrate it.

He turned the course of the Horse, and Barney and Pomp let go with a volley which settled the question.

Utterly routed the savages broke ranks and fled wildly in every direction.

This brought the conflict to an end. Frank saw that further pursuit was quite useless.

So he checked the Horse.

Bill Jackson sat upon his mustang some distance away and seemed to regard the rout of the savages with much satisfaction.

He suddenly put spurs to his mustang and rode up to the Steam Horse.

"Capen, I want to thank ye for savin' my life," he cried. "I reckon on Bill Jackson won't forget it."

"I am glad we were able to do so," said Frank, quietly. "Perhaps you had better keep along with us for awhile for the sake of safety."

"All right, capen," agreed Jackson. "I'll stay with ye till we git to the Panther Hills."

"That will be good. Then you can show us the nearest way to them."

"In course I can. Jest let your hoss foller mine."

Jackson struck spurs to his mustang and galloped away.

The Steam Horse followed at a good pace. In this manner miles of the sandy plain were covered.

Nothing more was seen of the Comanches.

It seemed certain that they had had enough and would not venture to attack the Steam Horse again right away.

As Jackson rode on he kept turning his head and regarding the Steam Horse.

It was a source of great wonderment to him.

Frank let down the steel sides of the wagon, as the danger was now past, and took in the good, clear prairie air.

Mile after mile was covered at a steady gait.

The Steam Horse could have gone ahead at a much more rapid gait. But Frank was desirous of keeping with Jackson as long as possible, so he kept the speed of the Horse down.

It was a curious spectacle to see that mighty Iron Horse, with its puffing nostrils, flying at a mad gallop over the plain.

It was little wonder that the ignorant minds of the savages had been deeply impressed by it.

At every clump of sage brush numberless jack-rabbits were scared up, and went bounding like fury balls across the desert waste.

At other times the Horse floundered among the treacherous mounds of a prairie dog village.

On passing a clump of timber a drove of young antelopes might be seen slinking away into the depths of the woods whenever a timber belt was passed.

Many wonderful sights were upon every hand.

Sometimes skeletons would be seen bleaching in the sands, and in many cases they were of human beings.

Wolves and vultures had stripped the bones so that it was impossible to tell whether they were recent victims or not.

"Begorrah, it's a mighty desolate-lukin' country, the same," averred Barney. "Share I'd not loike me bones to rest here."

"Golly, dat am a fac'," agreed Pomp. "It am a drefful lonesome place."

"Wait until we get into the hills, if you think this lonesome," laughed Frank. "The great deep passes among the eternal crags, with their awful solitude, is a scene far more depressing than this."

"Bejabers, ould Readestown am good enuf for me," declared Barney.

"Shure I don't care for the far Wist."

Jackson heard this expression, and turned with an ironical smile.

"What did ye come here for, then?" he asked, pointedly.

"Shure it was a foolish thrick," retorted Barney. "May the Vargin be blessed, but we don't mane to sktay here, just that same."

"Oh, there's a good many worse places."

"An' many betther."

"P'raps so."

"Shure I kin tell yez that. If iver ye seen the lakes av Killarney an'—"

"Hol' on dar, chile!" put in Pomp. "Dem fish lakes ain' a suckumstance to de beauties ob de Swaneey ribber, whar I was once a pickaninny."

"Whish now, me gossoon!" expostulated Barney. "Shure, there's no place in the worruld loike Killarney. Be jabbers, its many moiles they do cum to kiss the Blarney Stone, an' it's the handsomest contry in the worruld."

"Huh! dat's a'right," sniffed Pomp.

Barney was irritated.

He didn't like this kind of guying on Pomp's part, and he would have picked it up at once.

But at that moment an incident occurred to prevent.

A loud cry went up from Jackson.

He had risen in the stirrups and was pointing to the west.

"Look!" he cried. "Thar's the Panther Hills, friends."

Just visible upon the horizon line now was the outlines of the hills.

Every moment they drew nearer, and Frank saw that they were quite a large range of mountains.

He reckoned that they would reach there within an hour.

But darkness was close at hand, in fact; was rapidly approaching, and would be upon them by the time the hills were reached.

Jackson seemed to be aware of this, and rode alongside.

"I reckon we won't make the hills afore dark, capen," he said.

"It looks that way," agreed Frank.

"It's quite a bit of a ways."

"Yes."

"What'll ye do?"

"Well, we will keep on until we do reach them."

"And then—"

"We will camp on the spot."

"That suits me, friends. I'll stay by ye until mornin'."

"All right," agreed Frank.

Jackson urged his horse on now all the faster.

The distance was rapidly growing less. Soon only a plain five miles broad lay between them and the base of the hills.

This was crossed quickly, but when at length they arrived at the foot of a steep mountain wall, it was clearly too dark to go further. So Frank stopped the Horse and banked the fires in the furnace.

The coal supply was getting short, but as luck had it, the spot upon which they halted was directly over a vein of coal which extended into the mountain side.

"That is luck," declared Frank; "to-morrow we will fill the bunkers."

Camp was quickly made.

A fire was made from a heap of the coal, and an antelope shot by Barney in crossing the plain was dressed.

The juicy steak was cooked over the fire and proved most palatable.

All ate heartily and then sat down about the cheery fire.

It was the time of year in New Mexico when the days were blazing hot, and the nights frigid with the thermometer at 35 or 36 degrees.

One feels the cold fully as much in that sort of climate as in the Northwest with the temperature at zero.

It was just a good time for Barney to produce his fiddle and Pomp his banjo.

The two comical chaps played Irish jigs and plantation breakdowns, interspersed with songs galore.

Jackson seemed to enjoy the affair immensely.

Indeed, it was a rare treat to the plainsman, and he guffawed in good earnest.

"Wall, I swan!" he exclaimed. "Yew chaps are a caution, and no mistake. I'd like to have ye meet the rest of ther boys on ther range."

"Perhaps the opportunity may come," said Frank, pleasantly.

"Wall, I ain't much on the musical biz," declared Jackson, "but I used to know a tune or two on this thing."

He held up a Jewsharp as he spoke.

"Dat's right!" cried Pomp, "gib us a tune, sah."

Jackson did not refuse.

He placed the Jewsharp to his lips and began.

For a few moments his listeners were spell-bound at the amount of music that he actually succeeded in getting out of that Yankee instrument.

When he had finished all had applauded well, and Barney cried:

"Shure, sor, it's a wondher yez are wid that insthrument! I never heard the loikes av it afore."

"But it don't compare with the fiddle or the banjo," declared Jackson. "I only play for me own amusement."

"Well, yez play well!" cried Barney. "Shure, I don't see why we can't play a duet. Do yez know 'Garryowen'?"

"Sure!" replied the cowboy.

"Yez know the same, naygur," said Barney to Pomp. "Yez kin come in on the accomplishment."

"Golly! dat amn't harf so pretty as 'Kitty Wells,'" objected Pomp.

"Yez are a loiar," exploded Barney; "there niver was a chune yit invinted the aiquid av 'Garryowen'."

"Huh! Don' yo' call me a liar agin, I'ish."

The two belligerents glared at each other. Jackson saw the danger at once, and quickly interposed.

"Hold on, pard's!" he cried. "We'll play 'Garryowen,' an' then we'll play 'Kitty Wells' afterwards. That will divide it up."

"All right!" cried Barney. "Shure, that's fair enough."

"I'll agree to dat!" rejoined Pomp.

The argument was settled and all now went to work.

The three instruments seemed to work well together.

Jackson had a splendid bass voice, and with Pomp's tenor and Barney's baritone, the strains of "Garryowen" and "Kitty Wells" were richly rendered.

Frank listened with much enjoyment. When the last strains died out upon the air, Barney struck up a jig on his fiddle.

In a moment Pomp was upon his feet shuffling like mad.

The darky was having a high old dance when suddenly an incident occurred to put a peremptory end to the merry making.

Frank had chanced to glance up the mountain side.

As he did so his gaze encountered a startling object.

He was upon his feet in an instant.

"Hold up!" he cried, sharply, "there's danger ahead."

In an instant Barney's fiddle and Pomp's banjo went into their cases.

They sprang to Frank's side.

"Shure, Mistrer Frank, phwatterver is the matter?" cried Barney.

Frank pointed up the mountain side with his forefinger.

CHAPTER V.

THE LIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN.

"Do you see that?" he cried. "What is it?"

"It's a loight!" cried Barney. "Phwatterver is the cause of it?"

This was a conundrum.

It was certainly a light, far up the mountain side.

It gyrated for a few moments and then remained stationary. What did it mean?

Surely, it was a mysterious thing. It was not large enough for a camp-fire, nor did it look like a torch.

It appeared to be a red signal lantern, such as are used by trainmen for signals on the line.

"It's a lantern!" cried Frank.

"Shure, sor, that's what it is," agreed Barney.

Jackson stood like a statue watching the distant object. He did not speak for some moments.

Then he turned about with a deep breath and said:

"Don't ye think we'd better move our quarters, capen?"

"What do you mean?" asked Frank.

"Jest what I said."

"Why should we move camp?"

"Bekease I believe that there'll likely be danger here for us pooty quick."

"Ah! then you think that light indicates the proximity of an enemy?"

"I do."

"What sort of a foe?"

"Why, like enough Dun Darke and his gang."

"But do you think danger threatens us? They may not know that we are here."

"If they don't they soon will," declared Jackson, coolly. "An' then they might make it warm for us."

Frank hesitated a moment.

Then he said:

"I guess you're right, Jackson; but I have got a plan."

"What is it, pard?"

"Come with me and I'll show you."

Frank advanced to the wagon and opened the draughts of the furnace and began to get up steam in the Horse.

Then he pulled up the steel screens of the wagon.

"Barney and Pomp, you get aboard," he said, authoritatively.

The two servitors obeyed.

Then Frank turned to Jackson.

"My friend," he said, tersely, "you're a man of sand, I take it."

"Try me!" replied the cowboy, tersely.

"I will. You are not afraid to accompany me on a little bush scout up the mountain side?"

Jackson whistled softly.

"I see your game!" he said. "I am with you."

"You will go?"

"Yes."

"Bejabers, Mistrer Frank, won't yez let me go wid yez?" cried Barney.

"Not this time," replied Frank, "but you may remain here with the Horse in readiness to fly if the foe pounce upon you. If the foe do not show up wait here until we return."

"All right, sor!" cried Barney.

"We'll do jes' as yo' says, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp.

"See that you do."

Frank then turned to Jackson.

"Now we are ready!" he declared. "Let us be off."

Without hesitation the two men at once struck out into the darkness.

Up the mountain side they went, side by side and with great stealth.

Frank had located the position of the red light, so that he believed he could go directly to it.

It was not easy work clambering over the rough tree trunks and ledges which strewed the mountain side.

But slowly and persistently they made their way upward.

After a time they came out upon a rocky ledge from which a view of the plain below was to be had.

Nothing could be seen of the lights of the Steam Horse, which were undoubtedly hidden by the fringe of trees.

But far above the strange red light could be seen.

"That is curious!" muttered Frank. "It seems as far off as ever."

"You're right," agreed Jackson. "Wall, p'raps it's moving upward jes' the same as we are."

"No."

Frank gave a sharp, sudden exclamation and pointed out on the darkened prairie.

A strange sight was there to be seen.

Twinkling in the blackness like a myriad of stars were a large number of lights.

There was sufficient halo from them for the two watchers to identify the dim figures of horsemen.

They were riding toward the hills, and were bearing torches or lanterns.

"That's curious," muttered Frank, in amazement. "What on earth does it mean?"

"It's Dun Darke's gang!" declared Jackson, earnestly. "And they're a-comin' right straight toward the hill."

"That's true!" rejoined Frank, in consternation. "And the Steam Horse is right in their path."

"Great guns!" gasped Jackson. "Ye're dead right!"
 "It is a bad outlook."
 "Shall we go back and give the boys help?"
 Frank hesitated.
 "I don't believe it is necessary," he declared.
 "All right."
 "Barney and Pomp will very likely remember my instructions and keep out of the way of the foe."
 "Correct, boss! It's go ahead, then, is it?"
 "I think it best."
 "All right!"
 "But wait—see! they have changed their course."
 This was true.
 The train robbers had seemed to swerve to the southward and were receding in that direction.
 Frank was much elated.
 "That is good luck!" he cried. "We may go ahead now."
 Accordingly they continued their climb up the mountain side.
 The purpose of the red light was quite plain now.
 It was a signal or beacon for the returning party. Beyond doubt Darke's stronghold was somewhere in these hills.
 On up the hillside they pushed, Frank leading the way.
 Soon the trees grew smaller and more stunted, and then they came to vast ledges of granite.
 The summit was near and they looked for the red light.
 But it had disappeared.
 Somewhat mysteriously it had vanished, and there was nothing left to guide the searchers now.
 For a moment they were irresolute.
 Then Frank started forward.
 "Never say die!" he muttered. "We must go on at random now."
 "All right, boss!" agreed Jackson.
 Stumbling on in the gloom, a sudden cry from Jackson was heard and then a dull thud.
 With horror, Frank realized what had happened.
 "My God!" he cried, "have you fallen, Jackson? Where are you?"
 All was the silence of the grave.
 Frank bent down and crept forward cautiously upon his hands and knees.
 In a moment he had reached the brink of a precipice.
 Over this Jackson had plunged, it seemed to his death. Frank was petrified with horror.
 He listened for some sounds from the abyss below.
 He shouted the cowboy's name again and again. Then an inspiration came to him.
 He drew a small pocket lantern from his pocket and lit it.
 Then, bending over the edge of the precipice, he flashed its rays downward.
 Fifteen feet below he saw the level land at the foot of the descent. The distance was not very great after all.
 But there in a heap lay the body of Jackson.
 Frank fastened the lantern to his belt and proceeded to climb down the descent.
 In a moment more he was bending over Jackson, but already the cowboy was showing signs of returning consciousness.
 He had been merely stunned by the fall.
 Not a bone was broken and he was not badly injured. This was most fortunate.
 "Thank Heaven, you are alive, Jackson!" cried Frank.
 "Yes, pard, an' I'll wager me life I couldn't fall that distance agin an' escape alive."
 "I don't believe you could."
 Jackson scrambled to his feet.
 "I'm all right," he declared. "Only me head rings like a bell."
 "You will soon get over that."
 "In course I will. But do ye know, Mr. Reade, that just as I fell I had a queer sight?"
 "What?"
 "Why, jest up there through the darkness I saw the flash of a light and a man's head an' shoulders in it."

Frank was at once interested.
 "Where was this?" he asked.
 "Just up yonder—ah!"
 He ceased speaking.
 Both men craned their necks and tried to penetrate the gloom, while curious sounds came to their ears.
 "What do you call it?" whispered the cowboy, shrilly.
 "It is the tramp of horses' feet," declared Frank, positively.
 "So I thought!"
 "Ah! see that!"
 A bright light suddenly broke the gloom far up the mountain side. Only for an instant was it visible.
 It was as if a torch had for one instant been visible at a crevice of the cliff, only to vanish as the one carrying it passed on.
 Without a word Frank and Jackson started up the slope.
 They understood the situation at once.
 The train robbers had returned from a raid, and were making their way through a defile over the mountains.
 Arrived at the brow of the height, the two watchers looked down upon the other side.
 Their gaze was at once rewarded by a strange sight.
 A narrow gorge, which might at times be the course of water, was thronged with men and horses.

Rough looking fellows they were, and at intervals one would carry a torch.

It was a weird and strange looking parade. The two spies watched it with interest.

"Them air Dun Darke's men," declared Jackson, positively. "I know it by the looks on 'em."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank. "Is Darke himself there?"

"Yes—there he is, just up the defile a hundred feet or more."

Frank gazed with interest upon the chief of the train robbers.

CHAPTER VI.

A SCOUTING TRIP.

DUNCAN DARKE was a tall, powerful-framed man, with long curling black mustache, sharp chin, high cheek bones, and hawk-like eyes.

In all the New Mexico wilderness no man was better known, or more generally feared.

He was responsible for many a desperate raid on ranch and railroad. Many a home had been made destitute and many a crime lay charged at the door of the villain.

He was literally a villain of the dyed-in-wool sort.

Cruelty and love of bloodshed were his chief perquisites. Wherever he struck blood flowed wickedly.

Many efforts had been made by law-abiding communities to capture and imprison him.

Vigilant bands had scoured the plains and searched the hills.

Battles had been fought to the finish, but Darke always came off victorious in all of them.

It was said that he had often captured the daughters of settlers and carried them captive up into the mountain retreat, there to make slaves of them.

The daring train robbery on the M., N. & T. was but one of many such episodes.

In fact, the villain organized and kept in existence a perfect reign of terror throughout southern New Mexico.

When the rumor went out that he had not after all secured the million dollar prize, the excitement was intense.

Various theories as to the disappearance of the treasure were expounded.

But none of them served to explain it. Searching parties went forth, but returned empty handed.

Frank Reade, Jr., gazed with great interest at the celebrated bandit.

Of course, in the dim light of the torches, he had not the best sort of an opportunity to study his features.

But Frank saw that he was not a man of the ordinary sort.

"He will be a hard one to handle," he muttered.

"You are right!" chimed in Jackson. "He's a wicked individual."

"Undoubtedly he is now on his way to his stronghold."

"Yes, I reckon so."

"What had we better do?"

"Wait a bit."

The outlaws continued to file by to fully the number of seventy-five. After they had gone from sight and the gorge was still, the two watchers ventured to emerge from their concealment.

"Come on, pard," whispered Jackson. "Let's catch on behind." Down into the gorge they clambered.

Reaching the trail below, they crept swiftly along in pursuit of the outlaws.

The torches were dimly visible in the distance, and keeping these in view, they crept on.

The gorge was a long and winding way through the hills.

It seemed almost interminable, but suddenly it came out to the brow of a mountain wall, jutting down a thousand feet or more.

Upward was the same distance in sheer ascent.

A path wound along the face of this. It terminated finally upon a shelf of rock, seemingly one hundred feet in width, and extending to the verge of the precipice.

In the mountain wall back of the aerial plateau was a deep-mouthed cavern.

Nature had endowed the spot with all the perquisites necessary for the stronghold of an outlaw.

All this Frank and Jackson were enabled to see from their position, which was in an angle of the cliff just where the path merged with the shelf.

"Great guns!" gasped Jackson, "did ye ever see the beat of that, capen?"

"It is certainly a very secure retreat," agreed Frank.

"Jiminy! however can we even with your Steam Hoss expect to lick this hull tribe?"

"We cannot do it very well," agreed Frank.

"What's yure idee, then?"

"Well, my plan is to work some scheme to capture Darke. However, if he has not got the million dollars stolen from the express company I don't know as it would be doing much toward gaining the ends I have expected to."

"Jest what I was thinkin', boss; only if ye capture Darke he'll like enough give evidenca to clear young Mayhew, eh?"

"Just so," replied Frank; "although just at present I don't see how we are going to do it."

"I suttinly don't nuther."

"At least, it is well to know that we have gained positive knowledge of the exact location of the robbers' den."

"Jes' so!"

"Now, I think we might as well return to the Horse."

"All right!"

With this the two watchers started to creep back down the gorge in the shadows so dense. They made their way easily along the narrow path into the gorge. Here the darkness was intense. It was necessary to proceed with the greatest caution. It was odd that no guard was posted in the gorge. Frank noted and marveled at this.

However, it was fortunate for them that this was the case.

Down the gorge they crept rapidly.

Suddenly a startling thing occurred.

Jackson paused and clutched Frank's arm.

"Jericho! do ye hear that?"

Faint from the distance came the shrill, ear-splitting whistle of the Steam Horse.

Something was wrong.

"They have been attacked!" cried Frank; "that is a signal to us I am sure."

"Great guns!" ejaculated Jackson. "What kin we do, pard?"

"Back to the plain as quickly as possible."

The two men started down the gorge at full speed.

But now a startling sound came from their rear.

It was the winding of a horn and the clatter of horses' hoofs.

"They have taken the alarm and are coming!" gasped Frank, "they heard that whistle."

"I reckon ye're right, boss!" cried Jackson. "What shall we do?"

"Come quick! they will be upon us."

Frank pulled his companion into the shadows by the side of the path.

He was not a moment too soon.

Crouched by the mountain wall the two explores saw the horsemen go by at a full gallop.

Down the gorge they swept.

But just fifty yards beyond, the horse ridden by one of them stumbled and fell in a heap.

The rider was thrown instantly.

The gang did not stop, however, but kept on at full swing.

For a moment, Frank and Jackson hesitated as to what move to make.

The horse lay upon its side with a broken leg.

The rider was insensible in a heap in the path. Not one of the other outlaws was in sight.

"Listen!" cried Frank; "do you hear any more coming?"

"No."

"I have an idea!"

"Well?"

"Let us make a prisoner of that chap if he is not dead."

"What for?"

"We can force him to give us much valuable information. Perhaps he can tell us about the million dollars."

"But will he?"

"He might with a threat of death."

"Ye're a brick. Go ahead an' I'll folly ye anywhere."

Frank ran quickly to the side of the prostrate outlaw.

He was just in the act of attempting to get upon his feet.

He had been unhurt beyond a little shaking up and a few bruises.

Frank instantly held a revolver at his head.

"Hands up!" he said, sternly. "I have the drop!"

The fellow obeyed.

"Who are ye?" he growled.

"A friend, if you obey orders."

"What do ye want?"

"Are you not one of Darke's gang?"

The fellow dropped an oath as he replied tersely:

"I ain't sayin'."

"No, but had better. There's a lead pellet in this pistol."

"Wall, neighbor, I low ye're right. I am one of the gang."

"Did Darke just go by with his men?"

"Yes."

"Who is left at the den?"

The fellow hesitated.

"Who the devil are ye?" he asked. "What do you want to know for?"

"It don't matter. I want a truthful answer."

"Wall, I kain't say as there's much of any one."

Frank was silent a moment. He was busy ruminating as to what was now the best move to make.

If he had the Steam Horse on hand, with a clear course he would have considered it just the opportunity to gain possession of the outlaws' retreat.

But with only Jackson to assist him it would be folly.

"Look here!" he said, bluntly. "Where is that million dollars stolen from the Texas Express Company?"

The outlaw gave a sharp cry.

"Oho!" he exclaimed, "now I know what ye are. Ye're a detective."

"Well," said Frank, impatiently, "what do you say about it?"

"I dunno where it is."

Frank held the cold muzzle against the villain's temple.

"I want the truth!" he said.

The outlaw shuddered.

"I kin tell ye one thing that Dun Darke ain't got it."

"What do you mean?"

"Somebody else has got it."

"Who?"

"Wall, now, ye ask me a hard question," replied the fellow. "Some on 'em believe the box was picked up an' carried off by Black Arrow, the Comanche chief. Dun has bin tryin' to git a fight on with the Comanches fer a long time so as to git the box back. Ye see, them Injuns ain't no use for it, only they think it's valuable to the whites, an' they'll hold onto it fer pure cussedness."

"I see," agreed Frank. "And now—"

He did not finish the sentence.

A warning cry came from Jackson.

"Look out, pard, that's mischief ahead!"

From the gloom sprang a score of dark forms. The light of torches flashed upon the scene and a mocking voice cried:

"Here's ther interloper, lads! Surrender, ye coyotes, an' don't make a move or every one of ye are dead men!"

CHAPTER VII.

ADVENTURES OF BARNEY AND POMP.

BARNEY and Pomp left with the Steam Horse were not to be denied their share of thrilling experiences.

As Frank and Jackson glided away into the gloom Barney groaned:

"Shure, I don't see why Misster Frank should be after takin' that omadoun along with him an' lavin' a valuable man like me at home."

"Golly! dat am a nice speech fo' yo' to make, Iish!" scoffed Pomp. "He don't want no men wif him what would be afraid ob dere own shadows."

"Bejabers, thin he'd never take yez."

"I jes' fink he'd take me rather dan yo', sah."

"Ye're a loiar."

"Huh! look out dar, Iish. Don' yo' git me excited."

"Bejabers, I don't care no more for ye than I do for a yaller dog."

"An' I don't keer fo' yo' zo mo' dan a wet hen."

"Whurroo!"

"Ki-yi! Bah!"

Barney could stand no more. His blood was up, and he was just ready for a ruction with any one.

He picked up a lump of coal and hurled it at Pomp.

But the darky was an expert base-ballist, and made as pretty a catch as an expert behind the bat.

Moreover, he hurled it back as if throwing to first base.

Barney did not reach for a low ball, and the lump of coal took him a sharp crack in the shins.

"Och hone! Murther! It's kilt I am!" roared the Celt, stooping down with a paroxysm of pain.

Then he recovered and made a rush at Pomp, who was roaring with laughter.

The Celt and the African became involved in a rough and tumble in the wagon.

The steel curtains were drawn up, and in the struggle Barney forced Pomp over the fender of the wagon.

"Shure, it's overboard I'll throw yez!" roared the Celt. "Take soft tumble, ye spaldeen, an' that's to pay yez for the damage yez did me leg."

"Golly! If I goes ober yo' jes' goes, too!" cried Pomp.

Fastening a hold upon the Celt's collar, Pomp pulled him over.

The next moment both went out in a heap.

They rolled about on the green sward in a lively rough and tumble. Neither seemed to gain the advantage, and, finally completely exhausted, they released hold on each other.

"Bejabers, I'll say quits if ye will, naygur!" cried Barney.

"A'right, Iish!" agreed Pomp.

Both scrambled to their feet.

At that moment a startling fact became apparent to them, which, in the excitement of their wrestling, they had failed to see. Out upon the prairie were flashing lights.

Barney gave a sharp cry.

"Shure, what's that?" he cried, in alarm. "The enemy are coming!"

"Glory fo' goodness!"

Both scampered aboard the wagon. They then proceeded to watch the advancing lights.

That they were torches became evident, and the forms of the horsemen could be seen.

"Shure, they're comin' straight down for us!" cried Barney.

The Celt's hand was upon the throttle rein and he was ready to set the Horse in motion in case of necessity.

But suddenly the horsemen changed their course.

They swept on around an angle of the mountain wall.

It was safe to assume that they had not seen the Steam Horse at all.

The two servitors drew a breath of deepest relief.

"Begorra, I'm glad the spalpeens didn't come here at all," cried Barney.

"It am de bes' ob luck," agreed Pomp.

"But phwat av Misster Frank?"

They looked at each other.

"I done reckon Marse Frank take keer ob himself."

"I don't know about that, sor," protested Barney. "Shure I think there's some devilry afloat, an' shure I think in me own moind that rid light up yinder is the cause av it."

Both glanced up the mountain side and then staggered back with a sharp cry.

The light was no longer visible.
What did it mean?

For a moment both were silent.

"Shure, it's too much foolin' we've been a-doing!" cried Barney, picking up his rifle. "In me moind I kin see that we're in a dangerous place here."

"Golly, I jes' fink you're right!" agreed Pomp.

"Dar may be 'cashun fo' us to git up an' git pooty quick!" he rejoined a moment later.

"Bejabers, I'm thinkin' that same mesilf. Now, phwat will we do?"

"Suah, Marse Frank done tolle us to stay yer."

"That is, if we didn't have thrubble, to drive us away, naygur!"

"Well, we jes' ain' been 'tacked yit by de enemy. No use fo' to move yit."

"Ye're roight, naygur. I'm thinkin' it'll be the best thing we kin do to kape a good watch, though!"

"You're right dar!"

With this conclusion the two faithful servitors with their rifles in hand sat down upon the wagon dasher and began to watch and listen.

For a long while they sat thus.

Full an hour passed.

Then a startling thing occurred.

Suddenly Pomp gave a start and nearly fell from his seat.

"Golly fo' glory!" he screamed. "What ebber am dat?"

"Bejabers, it's the enemy," cried Barney.

Around a bend in the mountain wall, coming from the northward as it were, was a band of horsemen.

Several of the leaders carried torches.

In the light of these the others could be seen plainly enough.

They were fully a score in number and were riding rapidly.

Straight toward the Steam Horse they were coming.

Barney was for a moment at a loss what to do.

"Whurroo!" he cried, "the devils will soon be on us, an' shure, if they surround us, it's a hard fight ther'll be."

"Golly! Dat's right."

"Bejabers, I think an ounce of prevention is worth a pound av cure. Shure, I'm goin' to rethreat."

It was evident that the outlaws had spotted the lights from the Steam Horse, for they were yelling like mad.

Barney knew that there was no use in trying to disguise matters.

A crisis had been reached, and action was necessary.

To him it seemed important to let Frank know of the true state of affairs, so he pulled the whistle valve.

A sharp, shrill shriek went up on the night air.

Then Pomp closed the steel curtains and sprang to the loopholes with his rifle.

While Barney sent the Steam Horse galloping out over the plain, Pomp proceeded to fire at the pursuers.

It was easy for him, good marksman that he was, to pick off the villains adroitly.

The Winchester barked every five seconds until the magazine was exhausted. Then Pomp seized Barney's rifle.

The Steam Horse could easily outstrip the horses of the outlaws.

But this was not Pomp's game.

"Keep de Horse jes' about so,' he adjured Barney. "Dat will jes' keep dem in good range yo' know."

"All right, naygur."

In this way the darky could speedily have exterminated the whole gang of pursuers.

But they evidently realized this and halted just in time.

They realized that they could not overtake the Horse.

The deadly rifle was too much for them. Wheeling their horses back to the hills they galloped.

Pomp turned to Barney.

"Jes' yo' brung de Hoss 'bout, will yo', Pish? I done fink we chase dem now."

The somewhat curious turning of tables now took place.

The pursuers became the pursued.

The Steam Horse thundered after them like a dread messenger of death.

At every stride it gained upon the outlaw band.

Pomp worked the Winchester for all he was worth.

The outlaws were panic-stricken.

They were now quite near the hills, when a remarkable sight was witnessed.

Down through the defile galloped a number of horsemen with torches.

They were the gang fresh from the den of Dun Darke.

They met the fleeing party, and of course had explanations with them.

This seemed to result in a change of plan, for they all sought refuge in the line of woods along the mountain wall and opened fire upon the Steam Horse.

The bullets fell against the steel curtains as thick as hail.

But they could do Barney and Pomp no harm.

The two servitors laughed in scorn, and Barney cried:

"Shure, we'll give them spalpeens all the fun they want afore we're done wid 'em. Whurroo! Foire away, yez bloody omadhoun, yez can't hurt nobuddy!"

"Golly! I jes' wish dey wud come out in de open field agin!" cried Pomp.

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when suddenly the thumping of horses' feet was heard, and from the gloom of the prairie into

the glare of light from the headlight of the Steam Horse there galloped a motley crew of savages.

They were Comanches, and they descended upon the Horse with wild yells.

"Begorra, wud yez luk at that?" cried Barney. "Give the devils a shot, naygur, an' I'll sthart the Hoss!"

"A'right, Pish."

Pomp began firing at the Indians, while Barney opened the throttle and sent the Horse along at full speed.

It would have been poor policy to have stood ground, for the savages excelled in numbers, and would have done the Steam Horse great damage.

So Barney let the Horse out for a run along the mountain's base.

But the savages did not pursue them far.

The rattle of firearms was heard, and, looking back, they saw that the outlaws had descended upon the Comanches, and a large-sized battle was in progress.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE OUTLAWS—A DARING ESCAPE.

FRANK READE, JR., and Jackson, the cowboy, were in a by no means pleasant position.

The score of dark forms surrounded them.

"Surrender, ye coyotes, or both of ye are dead men."

There was no alternative.

To resist was death.

To surrender seemed scarcely better, but Frank threw up his hands, as did Jackson.

"All right!"

"Go through 'em, boys! Take their weapons."

A torch was flashed in the faces of the two captives. A sharp exclamation escaped the leader.

"Wall, I swow!" he cried. "If it ain't the feller what has bin padadin' these parts with that Steam Hoss an' wagon."

"Jericho! ye don't mean it?" cried another.

"Look fer yerself."

"It's a dead sure fact."

"Here's a good catch."

"You bet!"

"We'll take 'em to ther den an' make 'em walk ther cliff."

"Good! Won't Dun think we've done a big job when he gets back?"

"Haw, haw, haw! It's luck!"

The villains roared with laughter. Frank and Jackson were led away, with their hands tied behind them.

It did not take long to reach the stronghold of the outlaws.

Here the two captives were led into a circle of firelight near the mouth of the cavern.

These score of outlaws seemed to be all that were left in the place.

But the leader, a tall, gaunt individual, seemed to take all responsibility upon his own shoulders without waiting for the return or sanction of Darke.

"Hadn't we better wait till Dun comes back, Jim?" asked one of the gang.

"Tain't necessary," retorted the leader, quickly. "These chaps are our game. It's just what Dun would do with 'em anyway."

"All right!"

"Set a torch out yonder on the brow of the cliff. Then make ready half a dozen of ye to throw 'em over."

Frank experienced a chill.

It began to look as if their fate was sealed and that they were to meet their death in a frightful manner.

"My soul, Jackson!" he whispered. "We are done for!"

"B'gosh, it looks like it," replied the cowboy, coolly.

"Is there no way that we can escape?"

"I don't see any yit."

"It can't be that these wretches will be so inhuman as to carry out their devilish purpose."

Jackson laughed coolly. He was certainly a man of nerve.

"They'll do anything," he replied; "they're a hard lot."

"It will be death to go over that precipice."

"I reckon it will."

"Well, we can't die but once," declared Frank, grimly. "We will make the best of it."

"You bet. When Bill Jackson shows ther chicken heart, it will be a very cold day, I reckon."

The wretches were now busy measuring the distance to the edge of the cliff.

"Stand 'em facing that way," cried the outlaw leader. "Six of ye stand back of 'em with rifles. If they try to dodge, shoot 'em down."

Frank had been quietly working on his bonds.

To his great joy he felt them yield a trifle.

Hastily he worked upon them.

A wild and daring hope entered his breast. If he could only free his hands in time he believed that he could make a daring effort to escape.

He whispered hoarsely to Jackson:

"I think I can free my hands," he said. "If so——"

"Good fer ye, pard!" returned Jackson in the same whisper. "I've been tryin' the same dodge, an' I'm likely to git 'em free."

"If we do, what is the move?"

"I think we better cut for the cave."

"But that will be only into the trap deeper."

"If we go in any other direction they'll shoot us down. We kin git into the cave and make a big fight p'raps. It's certain death to do anything different. Mebbe there's another way of gittin' out of the cave."

Frank saw that Jackson was right.

Accordingly, he replied:

"All right. We will adopt your plan, Jackson."

He understood well why Jackson's bonds were loose as well as his own.

The bandits had not taken the pains to tie either very firmly.

As a result, it was easy to stretch the hempen cord with which they were bound. Had it been a lariat this would have been impossible. In a moment Jackson whispered shrilly:

"I'm free, Frank! How are you?"

Frank tugged a moment at his bonds and then replied:

"I am the same."

"Good! we're ready to act, then?"

"Yes."

"Hold your hands as if they were yet tied."

"Of course."

"Now," whispered Jackson, "when I give the word just take a backward leap and cut into that cave. In course we've got to take the chance of stoppin' a bullet."

"All right."

At this moment the leader of the band of outlaws shouted:

"What are you devils whispering 'bout? Keep an eye on 'em, boys. It won't do 'em no good, for they can't escape."

The two prisoners trembled for a moment.

But the outlaws in charge only increased their vigil for a few moments.

Then they relaxed it as before.

Only two men stood beside the prisoners. Jackson whispered again:

"We kin do it now, Frank. If you kin crack that fellow beside you, I'll take care of my man."

The other outlaws were at the brow of the cliff, holding a discussion. It was an admirable opportunity, and they embraced it.

"Now!" gritted Jackson.

Quick as a flash he threw up his arms and struck the guard beside him a stunning blow.

Down the fellow went and Jackson grabbed his rifle from his hands and went flying for the cave.

Frank struck at his man and partly felled him.

Before the outlaw could recover, Frank was away like a fleeting shadow for the cave.

So suddenly was the daring move made that the shadows hid them before the other outlaws could make a move.

With a roar of rage and fury the leader of the gang yelled:

"After 'em, I tell ye! Don't let 'em git away."

It was lucky for the fugitives that they chose the cave as a method of retreat.

If they had tried to make the gorge they would have been overtaken by bullets.

Into the cavern they rushed at full speed.

All was darkness, and they were at a loss in what direction to go. But Jackson suddenly came to an abrupt halt by running into a blank wall.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "Tain't any use to go further. Let's hold 'em off here. We kin do it."

"You're right!" replied Frank. "We can hold them off."

This seemed not difficult.

From the cave it was looking into the light and the outlaws were good targets.

At once fire was opened.

Bullets came into the cave in a shower and Frank and Jackson barely escaped them.

But they sank down behind a spur of the cavern wall.

From behind this they picked off the foe easily with their Winchesters.

It was a deadly fire which they gave the outlaws.

One—two—three of them fell almost instantly. Two more dropped before they came to their senses.

Then they dodged into the gloom.

It was the opportunity.

Jackson gripped Frank's arm.

"Now is our chance!" he cried. "Let us make for the gorge."

"All right!"

Out of the cavern they glided, keeping in the shadows of the mountain wall.

Firing had ceased now, and the outlaws, oblivious of the exact position of their foes, were doubtless trying to get up a stratagem to draw them out.

It was certainly the opportunity and the escaped prisoners saw it.

Along the mountain path they glided.

Suddenly Jackson halted and raised his rifle.

"Hands up!" he said, sharply and tersely.

A dark form stood before him in the dense gloom.

It was a guard stationed there by the outlaw leader. He did not at once obey the command.

There was a sharp flash, a stunning report and Jackson clapped his hand to his temple.

The flame of the rifle muzzle so near him had actually burned him.

But the bullet, fortunately, went wide of its mark.

Jackson acted quickly.

With a sudden movement he struck up the rifle barrel and dealt the guard a terrific blow.

The fellow went down like a log. Loud shouts were heard behind, and Frank cried:

"Quick, Jackson, they are after us!"

But the cowboy needed no bidding. Together they dashed on down the gorge.

Soon they began to descend toward the plain below.

Sounds of pursuit had died out in their rear.

But now a startling thing became apparent. Just ahead they heard the rattle of fire-arms and the evidence of a battle.

"What can it mean?" cried Frank. "Have they attacked Barney and Pomp?"

"P'raps so," rejoined Jackson, "but I don't believe it. They wouldn't make such a racket as that."

"Of course not; but what can it be?"

"I have an idea."

"What?"

"I think it likely that the gang that passed us a while ago have struck in with some Injuns an' they're having a scrap."

Both pressed forward as fast as their legs would carry them.

CHAPTER IX.

[ON TO THE COMANCHE VILLAGE.]

Down the gorge the two men ran at full speed.

Every moment the sounds of the conflict became louder and nearer. It was plainly evident that a large sized battle was in progress.

The last one hundred yards lay before the two men now, and in another moment they came out upon the prairie.

A thrilling sight rewarded their gaze.

The plain was the scene of a terrific conflict between Comanches and Dun Darke's gang of outlaws.

They gazed upon the scene with the deepest interest.

"It's dog eat dog!" cried Jackson. "I wonder which will win?"

"It is hard to say!" rejoined Frank. "It is certainly a terrible fight."

They were at a safe distance from the combatants, so they continued to watch the conflict.

"Do you know my sympathies are with the Comanches?" cried Frank. "They are no less our enemies, it is true, yet I would like to see them whip the villains."

"Same thar, pard!" cried Jackson. "And as I am a livin' sinner, I believe they will do it."

This seemed a fact.

The outlaws seemed likely to be literally cut to pieces. Their band had been so badly decimated that not one-third of their original number survived.

And these were rapidly falling beneath the deadly fire of the savages.

"By Jove, they will be wiped out!" cried Frank.

Even as he spoke, the mere handful of train robbers left retreated to the mountain side.

The victorious savages pursued them with fiendish yells and cries.

Swiftly riding, the remnant of Dun Darke's band, scarce a dozen in number, came rapidly in for the gorge.

Frank and Jackson were just in time to find a hiding-place among some rocks.

The train robbers dashed into the pass with the savages after them.

It was a thrilling scene, and Frank and Jackson watched it spell-bound.

But soon the dark shadows of the pass hid savages and robbers from view.

"Jericho!" gasped Jackson. "I hain't seen sich a fight as that for years."

"Now, the question is," said Frank, brusquely, "where are Barney and Pomp with the Steam Horse?"

Even as he spoke a sharp cry escaped Jackson's lips.

"Look yonder, pard!" he cried. "What do ye call that?"

Unmistakably out upon the plain was the peculiar headlight of the Steam Horse.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, flourishing his arms. "We are safe. It is the Horse!"

The young inventor, without ceremony, rushed toward the Horse.

Jackson followed on behind.

Barney and Pomp we left at the close of a preceding chapter also spectators of the terrific battle.

They had watched it with interest to the very last.

And, as the outlaws were driven into the pass, Barney cried:

"Bejabers, I'm not sorry, fer on me worrud I'd rather see the Comanches lick the spalpeens."

"Golly! dat am a fac'!" agreed Pomp.

The two servitors, after the disappearance of the combatants in the pass, sent the Horse along toward the mountain.

"I jes' fink dis am a good time fo' de return ob Marse Frank an' dat cowboy," cried Pomp.

"Yez are roight!" agreed Barney, "an—— Whurroo!"

The Celt let out a regular wild Indian yell.

The reason for this was apparent.

The headlight's glare showed two familiar forms running across the plain and waving their arms.

It was Frank and Jackson.

The next moment the young inventor sprang aboard the wagon.
 "Golly fo' glory, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, ecstatically, "I'se awful glad fo' to see yo' back agin. Fo' sho' I fought yo' was done gone fo'ever."
 "Begorra, Misther Frank, it's overjoyed we are!"
 "And I am awful glad to find you and the Horse all safe!" cried Frank. "Did you have any ruction with the foe?"
 "That we did, sor!" cried Barney.
 With this, mutual explanations followed, as well as congratulations. Jackson all this while had stood outside.
 Frank caught sight of him, and recalling himself, threw open the door.
 "Come aboard, Jackson!" he cried.
 "Much oblieged, pard, but I think I'll be crowdin' ye."
 "Not a bit of it," returned Frank. "If you will, you shall join us for the rest of the trip."
 "Do ye mean it?"
 "Yes."
 "An' will thar be room fer us all?"
 "If there is not, we will pretty quick make room."
 "Wall, I'll agree," said the plainsman, coming aboard. "I reckon my hoss is confiscated by the reds afore this. Jiminy! What a fine coop ye've got here anyway!"
 All now sat down and soberly discussed the situation.
 "You see, the most important thing of all," declared Frank "is to recover that million."
 "Kereet!" agreed Jackson. "Wall, we know one thing."
 "What?"
 "Dun Darke hain't got it."
 "So it would seem."
 "It is claimed that Black Arrow has it."
 "Yes."
 Jackson brought his hand down upon his knee forcibly.
 "I have it," he shouted.
 The others looked at him as if they thought him gone mad.
 "What?" asked Frank, tersely.
 "I have got it."
 "Bejabers, we kin see that."
 "Don' yo' wan' to git rid ob it?" chaffed Pomp.
 Jackson glared at them.
 "I'm not jokin', neighbors," he said, coolly. "I mean biz."
 "Exactly!" said Frank. "Go ahead, Mr. Jackson."
 The cowboy shifted his tobacco from one cheek to the other. Then he hitched at his trousers and sat down.
 "The pint is just this!" he said, with a huge expectoration through one of the loopholes in the steel curtain. "We know Dun Darke ain't got that money."
 "Yes."
 "They say Black Arrow has it, an' that he can't open the iron box."
 "Exactly."
 "Now, I'll go two fer one the Arrow an' the most of his braves are up that pass now fightin' ther robbers."
 "What of it?"
 "Why, kain't ye see? Prob'lly he has left that box with the million dollars in it to hum in his wigwam in the Comanche village."
 "Admitted!" said Frank, coolly. "Suppose that he has. What good is that going to do us when we don't know where the Comanche village is?"
 "But I know where it is, pards."
 The announcement created a sensation. All were upon their feet.
 "Do you mean it?" cried Frank, breathlessly.
 "Yas, I do."
 "Then—why cannot we go and surprise the village——"
 "Exactly! I know what I'm talkin' about, pards. Thar won't be nobody thar but a few old squaws and boys. We kin sheer them out, an' git that iron box with the money, an' all afore the Arrer an' his band of braves gits back."
 Frank sprang to the throttle rein.
 "Stand by my side, Jackson!" he cried. "Show me the way!"
 The cowboy was quickly by Frank's side. The throttle was opened and away went the Steam Horse.
 The gray light of dawn was appearing in the east.
 The sound of firing in the hills was evidence that the battle was being carried on yet.
 The Steam Horse went galloping away across the prairie.
 Mile after mile was left behind, and the dawn merged into bright daylight, when Jackson suddenly cried:
 "Do ye see that long belt of timber an' the chaparral next to it?"
 "Yes!" replied Frank.
 "Wall, in that timber you'll find the Comanche village."
 "We certainly will reach it before the chief Black Arrow does."
 "Oh, in course we will!"
 Faster went the Steam Horse and the timber loomed up near at hand.
 Even now they could see the long columns of smoke from the tepee fires of the Comanches rising above the trees.
 Into the timber dashed the Steam Horse.
 Some Indian boys playing in the brush fled in wildest terror.
 A clearing was just ahead.
 In the midst of it was the collection of tepees which made up the village of the Comanches.
 The next moment into this clearing burst the Steam Horse.
 The effect was indescribable.

Indian women with their pappooses fled screaming before the demon and boys and dogs scattered.
 The few braves sought safety in flight. In a twinkling the whole village was cleared out.
 Round the encampment the Horse went at full speed.
 Barney and Pomp kept up a firing and yelling to intensify the terror of the Indians.
 They succeeded most effectually.
 In less than three minutes not a savage was in sight.
 But where was the chest containing the million dollars?
 Jackson gave a great cry.
 "Look!" he shouted.
 An astounding sight burst upon the view of the explorers.
 There, in the center of the village green, was a huge pile of stones and ashes about them.
 In the center of this pile, which was evidently the bed of a hot fire, they saw the missing iron chest.
 It was battered and blackened with the action of the fire.
 But it had not yet been opened.
 The box was fire-proof steel and the resort of the savages to this method of opening it had failed.
 "As I live!" cried Frank Reade, Jr.; "it is the box!"
 "So it is!" cried Jackson, joyfully; "the gods are with us. Now, pard, let's get the box aboard as quick as we can."

CHAPTER X.

THE TREASURE RECOVERED.

A CHEER of triumph went up from Barney and Pomp.
 "Yo' kin jest bet that we will," cried the darky. "I reckon de million am foun'."
 "Begorra, it's another big thing for Misther Frank," cried Barney.
 "Shure, he's the most wonderful man alive to-day."
 "I agree with ye," cried Jackson, "but give us a lift, lad."
 The cowboy leaped out through the door of the wagon.
 Barney and Pomp followed him.
 There was no fire in the ashes about the steel chest now and they had no trouble in lifting it aboard the wagon.
 It added much to the great load imposed upon the wagon already.
 But there was no other way to do. Frank opened the throttle and with the others aboard and the steel treasure chest safely stowed started back for the open plain.
 In a few moments the Steam Horse was once more galloping over the vast expanse.
 It was now in the middle of the forenoon.
 All were hungry and weary and glad to accept the suggestion that a good place be found to stop and rest.
 After twenty-five miles run, near the hour of noon, an inviting spot upon the banks of a wide river was found.
 There was a patch of emerald greensward, some clumps of cacti and a bubbling spring.
 A depression in the bank made a nice place to stop, as they could not form a conspicuous object upon the plain.
 Jackson shot an antelope, and Barney and Pomp soon had a good fire going.
 Water from the spring was brought, the antelope steak was served, rich and juicy.
 To cap all, Frank produced a bottle of rare old Burgundy, and this whetted the appetites of all.
 After the meal they sat down about the fire in various attitudes of ease.
 The warmth of the sun was such, however, that they were soon very glad to move back a ways.
 Barney found a cozy spot in the bank and did not notice a gopher.
 The Celt was dozing beautifully, when suddenly he experienced a chill.
 Something was moving near him.
 An instinct told the Irishman, fortunately, not to move.
 He craned his neck a trifle and looked down.
 Horrors! There, just at his thigh, was a monster rattlesnake fully six feet long.
 The reptile had crawled out of the gopher hole, and Barney's form lay directly in its path.
 It was an awful position.
 He knew well the deadly nature of the reptile and the full weight of the danger which threatened him.
 The least move meant death.
 The reptile would be sure to strike quick as lightning.
 Barney lay quite still.
 Fortunately he kept perfect command of himself and waited results.
 He knew that if he did not move a muscle the snake would not be apt to strike him.
 Now he felt the snake's body glide over his leg with slow, dragging motion.
 Through his half-closed eyes Barney saw the reptile's gleaming eyes and the forked tongue darting in and out of his blunt mouth.
 It was an experience to daunt the strongest and bravest man.
 He lived ages in that brief space of time.
 What would be the end? Barney was in a fearful state of mind. The nervous strain was something terrible.
 Slowly across his lower limbs the big rattler crawled.
 The seconds seemed hours to the agonized Irishman. It seemed every moment as if he must give way to twitching of muscles, which would have meant certain death.

Now the snake was half across, but Barney experienced a fresh thrill of horror.

The reptile had paused.

The warmth of the Irishman's body was enticing, and the snake was preparing to coil itself up and enjoy a nap.

At this moment Jackson, who lay some twenty feet distant, turned over upon his side.

As the cowboy did this he saw the snake and Barney's position.

At the same moment he exchanged startled glances with Barney.

The cowboy had the presence of mind not to speak, or do aught at the moment to irritate the snake.

But he realized that only a desperate move would save Barney's life.

Jackson lay a moment silently watching the snake.

He saw the reptile's ugly head sink slowly down to a position of repose.

Then the daring cowboy made action.

He reached to his belt and drew a revolver.

Slight as the motion was, it had aroused the snake.

Up went the reptile's head instantly. The glistening eyes and darting tongue were plain to see.

The tail with its rattles stood straight up, ready to strike the warning note.

Slowly Jackson brought the revolver to a level with that glistening angry head.

The cowboy's aim was deadly.

A glance along the sight, a steady nerve, a quick, firm pressure upon the trigger, and—

Crack!

The weapon spoke sharply.

It would have been very easy to miss that swaying, terrible head, with its deadly poisonous fangs.

To have missed it would have been no disgrace to any expert marksman, but it would have been death to Barney.

But the bullet went true to its mark.

It struck the snake's head and spattered the brains everywhere.

In an instant the Celt was upon his feet.

He rushed into Jackson's arms and literally hugged him.

"Begorra, I owe ye me loifel!" he cried, excitedly. "Shure, how will I ever pay ye for it?"

"Yer don't owe me nuthin'!" cried Jackson, good humoredly.

"I'm only too glad to do it fer ye."

Of course Frank and Pomp were aroused.

There was no sleeping after that, for a very good reason.

Fully a dozen huge rattlers were killed in the vicinity within the next twenty minutes.

The lovely green dell seemed alive with them. They came from gopher holes, from beneath stones and tree trunks, and were all hissing, savage fellows.

"Well, who ever would have thought it?" cried Frank. "It is not a spot to look for such vile reptiles."

"That's right, pard!" cried Jackson, "but jest the same here's where we find 'em. I reckon we kin call this Rattlesnake Holler."

"All right," agreed Frank. "That is just the name for it."

All now congregated by the water's edge, and a general discussion was held.

"I s'pose now ye'll take this money back ter civilization an' deliver it up to them people whom it belongs to?" asked Jackson, ungrammatically.

"Well," said Frank, hesitatingly, "that will not be the fulfilling of my mission exactly."

"Eh? How's that?"

"Of course, recovering the million dollars was one necessary thing. But the next thing is to capture Dun Darke and make him confess that Mayhew is an innocent man."

Jackson slapped his thigh with the palm of his hand forcibly.

"Now, that's the talk!" he cried. "Ye're jest the kind of a man I thought ye was. I'm with ye heart an' hand."

"I am glad to hear you talk that way!" said Frank. "I depend much upon you, Jackson."

"Wall, ye may, all ye please. But what's the fast move?"

Frank gazed furtively at the Steam Horse.

"I don't like to carry that treasure about with me!" he declared.

"If anything happened that we should be captured, Horse and all, the fœ would get it back again."

Jackson strode up and down a moment thoughtfully.

Then he paused.

"It's right ye are, friend!" he said, brusquely. "I've got a plan."

"What is it?"

"Dig a hole right here an' drop the box into it. Get your bearings an' ye kin come back here for it any time."

Frank clapped his hands.

"Good for you, Jackson!" he cried; "that is a prime idea. We will do it. The million dollars will be safer here than anywhere else."

"But are you sure there's a million in that box?" asked Jackson.

"No, not sure. But it won't take a moment to find out."

"I'd do it."

"I will."

Frank ordered Barney and Pomp to bring the box from the wagon.

They obeyed and it was deposited upon the ground near.

Then Frank proceeded to examine the lock.

Jackson took a look at it and said:

"I reckon ye'll have hard work to git that open, pard. Ye haven't a key?"

"No," replied Frank, "but I never saw a lock yet I couldn't pick." The young inventor drew some wire keys from his pocket and began work.

In just twenty minutes he had opened the box. As the lid swung back all pressed forward.

A wonderful sight was revealed.

There in the box were great rows of gold eagles and fire-proof cases containing great rolls of greenbacks.

A million dollars the box was said to contain.

Frank was not so foolish as to attempt to count. "The amount is supposed to be correct," he declared, "and the contents don't seem to have been disturbed."

He shut the lid and the lock shot back into place.

It was certain that none of the money had been taken out of the box. Shovels were taken from the wagon and Barney and Pomp dug a hole about three feet deep.

Into this the box was placed and covered up. The earth was closely packed and the sod put back in its place.

"Thar," cried Jackson, with satisfaction. "Nobody will ever find it thar. Now we kin come back fer it when we git ready."

"You are right!" cried Frank. "Now let us be off. Dun Darke must be captured before forty-eight hours."

All sprang into the wagon.

The sun was now past the hour of noon. Frank opened the throttle and the Steam Horse went galloping away over the prairie.

But the quartette had overlooked one very important fact.

Any hole dug in the prairie, or grave there made, unless covered with heavy rocks, is not likely to long remain unexplored.

The party had not been gone from the spot an hour when a number of gaunt coyotes came smelling about.

The freshly disturbed earth was to them a grave and they proceeded to explore it.

It required but a few moments for the beasts to excavate the hole and completely expose the iron treasure chest.

They indulged in howls of disappointment and rage at not finding the desired object of their quest.

After a time they left the spot, and there lay the treasure chest in plain view.

This had certainly not been the anticipations of the party that had just left the spot.

If it had, they certainly would have taken the precautions to make the hiding-place more secure.

As it was, the treasure lay exposed to the gaze of any passing human being, whether civilized or savage.

It would be sure to attract the gaze of the first person passing that way. If so, what would be the result?

It was certainly a strange and unsafe place to leave a million dollars.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STRONGHOLD DESERTED.

FRANK READE, JR., held the Steam Horse on a straight course back for the hills.

After a time they came in view again upon the horizon.

It was the latter part of the afternoon when the Steam Horse reached the mouth of the pass.

The scene here presented was a sickening one.

About upon every hand were evidences of the terrible battle which had occurred the night before.

The plain was literally strewn with the dead bodies of Indians and savages.

These were beginning to decompose in the hot sun and made a ghastly spectacle to look upon.

Into the pass Frank boldly urged the Steam Horse.

Jackson had made an examination of the trail and concluded that the savages were not in the pass.

Whether Duncan Darke and his gang were yet there remained to be seen.

Boldly the little party entered the pass.

The Steam Horse went ahead at a lively gallop.

In places the path was narrow, but the Horse made his way along famously, under the skillful guidance of Frank Reade, Jr.

Up the gorge they went.

Thus far not a sign of the savages had been seen or of Dun Darke's men.

No guards were encountered and nothing barred their progress. In a little while they came to the path around the cliff.

This was too narrow for the wheels of the wagon, and the Steam Horse could go no further.

A consultation was held.

"Begorra, I'll go ahead an' investigate wid yer leave, Misther Frank!" cried Barney.

"It don't seem to me as if there was anybody about here," said Jackson.

Frank exchanged glances with him.

"Then you think that the outlaws have been wiped out by the savages?"

Jackson nodded his head.

"I do," he said, with conviction. "I think that Black Arrow has wiped them out."

"It is no doubt a good job," said Frank, with a shrug of the shoulders, "and yet I wish that the Comanche chief had given me first the chance of arresting Darke."

"Well, we had better first make sure of it, pard," said Jackson. "I will volunteer to go ahead and reconnoiter."

"An' so will I!" chimed in Barney.

"Easy!" cried Frank, authoritatively. "You and Pomp will stay here while Mr. Jackson and I will do that."

Accordingly, with their rifles well in hand, the two men left the wagon and went forth to reconnoiter.

They skirted the face of the cliff, keeping a good lookout for the foe.

Very soon they came to a point from which a view of the outlaws' stronghold could be had.

The result was thrilling.

Not a person was in sight.

The place was as deserted as could well be imagined. All was the stillness of the tomb.

"It's just as I thought!" cried Jackson. "Black Arrow's gang has wiped them out of existence."

"It looks like it," agreed Frank, "but let us make sure of it."

Together they crossed over to the plateau and made a brief search. There were traces of a battle and a bloody trail led to the edge of the cliff over the valley.

This told the tale.

Even before they went to the edge of the cliff the two searchers guessed the awful truth.

The savages had slaughtered the train robbers and had thrown their bodies over the edge.

Below, fully a thousand feet, could be seen the pile of human bodies frightfully mutilated. It had been little short of a massacre, for the overpowering numbers of the savages made it such.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Frank with a shiver, as he turned away from the edge, "that is a dreadful sight indeed."

"Ye're right!" agreed Jackson. "An' yet it was a fate they deserved."

"Oh, yes."

"Wall, pard, that does away with some of yer plans."

"Certainly! Of course Duncan Darke was in that gang and is no doubt lying dead down there. There seems but one thing to do now."

"Ah!"

"And that is to go back to the spot where we left the million dollars, recover it, and strike for civilization."

"Jes' so!"

"There we can deliver up the money to the express company, and it is quite likely that Mayhew will be acquitted."

"He oughter!"

"Of course."

"We can't gain anything by staying around here any longer."

"No; the savages no doubt have located the train robbers' den, and there would be nothing left for us."

"I believe ye."

"So let us go back to the wagon."

And back to the wagon they did go. Barney and Pomp had been anxiously awaiting their return.

They listened to the explanation by Frank with deep interest.

"Golly, Marse Frank, dem Injins did their work up well, didn't dey?" cried Pomp.

"Bejabers, I don't believe they've killed that spaldeen av a Darke yit!" cried Barney. "Yez will see that he will turn up alive somewhere yit. Shure, them kind av min have the loives av a cat."

Jackson laughed at this.

"I don't know but that you're right, Barney," he cried.

"Shure an' I am!" cried the Celt. "Yez will see that same."

"Well, if that is so, and we can get our clutches on him," put in Frank, "it will be a good thing."

"Shure it'll not be airy to do that."

The Steam Horse was now headed down the defile.

Frank was at the dasher, and they had hardly reached the plain when a thrilling thing occurred.

Suddenly in the defile just ahead there appeared six mounted Comanches.

With a start, Frank put on the brake.

But if the voyagers were surprised, the Comanches were more so.

For a moment they sat on their ponies like statues.

"Golly sakes!" cried Pomp, wildly. "Jes' gib me my rifle dar, I fish!"

But before anybody could make a shot at the redskins, they wheeled their ponies and went clattering madly down the defile.

Frank allowed the Horse to go along at a moderate gait.

But suddenly turning a corner in the wall of the pass, all saw that the gorge was literally jammed with mounted savages.

This was a startling fact.

Such an obstacle it was by no means easy to dispute. For a moment Frank was in dismay.

But there was no time to lose.

The Comanches had started forward to the attack with wild yells.

There were but two things now for Frank to do.

The Steam Horse could beat a retreat, and a stand could be made further up the gorge. On the other hand, a bold dash could be made through the ranks of the savages.

The latter was the most risky move. There was the danger of smashing the machinery of the Horse.

But acting upon the impulse of the moment, Frank made the move. He pulled open the throttle wide, and shouted:

"Now, stand by all! Give them a volley right and left."

Forward plunged the Steam Horse at a breakneck gait.

The next moment it swept down into the ranks of the savages.

The effect was terrific.

The weight of the iron horse was more than the light pories and their dusky riders could resist.

Dozens of them were overthrown, the steel knives upon the hubs of the wagon wheels cut a path through the heaving, struggling mass.

Now and again the Horse seemed likely to capsize.

But Frank held the reins steady, and on the monster went in its relentless course.

Barney and Pomp fired right and left, and many were their victims.

In what seemed a few seconds the Steam Horse broke through the lines of the savages and went tearing down the pass to the plain below.

Frank opened the whistle valve and let out sharp shrieks of triumph.

Out over the plain went the Horse at a terrific rate of speed.

Soon the pass and the hills were left well behind. It was a complete victory and a narrow escape from what had seemed like destruction.

"Jericho!" exclaimed Jackson, with a long breath. "I wouldn't run another's gantlet like that fer the million dollars we kivered up in the sand out yender."

"It was a close one," agreed Frank, "but we pulled through."

"Thanks to yer nerve and stiddy hand, pard."

"Oh, no; it was good luck."

"I don't agree with ye."

The Steam Horse kept on at a very swift gait across the plain.

As a result it was not quite dark when they reached the spot on the banks of the sluggish river where the million dollars had been buried.

Frank threw open the door of the wagon and sprang out.

As he did so a gang of coyotes went scampering out of the little green dell.

The young inventor advanced to the verge of the dell and looked down. He beheld an astounding sight.

There was only a hole in the ground where the grave had been, and the box containing the million was not in it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TREASURE MISSING.

WORDS are wholly inadequate to express the sensations experienced by Frank Reade, Jr.

For a time he could not speak.

He saw plainly that the box had been dug up. It looked as if this had been done by coyotes.

But the box itself was missing.

Jackson was now by his side.

As the cowboy saw and realized the situation he was dumfounded.

"Great guns!" he finally ejaculated. "Wall, if that don't beat me. It's gone!"

"Yes, it's gone!" repeated Frank.

"Golly sakes, Marse Frank," cried Pomp, in horror. "Yo' don' mean to say dat?"

"Bejabers, here's bad luck to ther amadhoun what sthole it!" cried Barney.

Frank and Jackson sprung down to the hole, and began to make an examination.

"It is the work of coyotes," declared Jackson. "That is very plain."

"Yes," agreed Frank, "but coyotes couldn't take the box away."

"That is very true. And yet, pard, it's easy to see how some pilgrim, goin' this way, has spotted it and took it along with him."

"He certainly couldn't take it away single-handed. It is too heavy."

"He might have loaded it on ther back of a mule or hoss."

"Very true. In that case, there ought to be a trail hereabouts."

"Certain!"

"As you are a plainsman, Mr. Jackson, perhaps you can find it."

"I've lived on ther plains, but I ain't keen at a trail."

"Well," said Frank, "Pomp is an adept at it—we'll try him."

Pomp was quickly on hand.

He began to search for the trail, and the others watched with interest.

The darky quickly found it, and like a sleuth-hound followed its ramifications about the dell.

At length, emerging from the tangle, he struck out upon the plain. Then he said:

"Ise got it all right, Marse Frank."

"Good for you, Pomp."

"Dar an jes' six men in de pahty, and I reckon dey's white men."

"Ahl!"

"Dey hab probably strapped de chest onto de back of a led horse."

"Dey's taken a course jest to de souf, sag."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, "now we must overtake them. I wonder who they are?"

"Maybe some of the boys off the range," said Jackson. "If so, then you'll have no trouble in gittin' it back, pard."

"I hope not," said Frank, hopefully.

All now went aboard the wagon and the Steam Horse was sent on to the trail to the southward.

Darkness came on quickly, however, and this necessitated taking a random course.

The trail had seemed to keep due to the south, so the horse was kept going in that direction.

The headlight lit up the prairie ahead for some ways and there was sufficient starlight to make a course.

Until long after midnight the Steam Horse kept on at a rapid pace. Then suddenly Pomp, who was on the lookout shouted:

"Light ahead, Marse Frank."

In an instant Frank was at the dasher.

"Where?" he asked.

"Jes' ober yender in de edge ob what looks like a clump ob trees."

"That is a chaparral!" declared the young inventor, excitedly.

"And without doubt that light is a camp-fire."

"Hooray!" cried Jackson, "then we'll soon catch the thieves."

"I don't know whether you can call them thieves or not," said Frank, "they may have found the box exposed by the coyotes, and in that case they were justified in carrying it away."

"Probably they couldn't open it."

"Perhaps not at present. They would find a way sooner or later."

"What's the move?"

"Strike into the edge of the chaparral, and creep down upon them. If they haven't seen our headlight, we're all right."

"I believe ye."

The Steam Horse was sent along until the chaparral was reached.

As Frank had directed, it was kept close in the shadows, and silently made its way along until within a few hundred yards of the camp-fire.

Then Frank stopped the Horse and opened the door.

"Come, Jackson!" he said, "let us take a little scout."

"I'm with ye!" cried the cowboy, with alacrity. "Jest lead on!"

Out of the wagon they sprang and crept along for a ways in the verge of the chaparral.

The camp-fire was quickly in plain view, and at this moment a peculiar noise was heard.

It was like the ringing of hammer and chisel upon iron. In fact, this was quickly proved to be the case.

About the camp-fire were half a dozen armed men.

Two of them were bending over the treasure chest and trying to pry it open with chisels.

Jackson gave a violent start.

"Heavens!" he gasped. "What a chance. That is Dun' Darke."

Frank was astounded.

"You are right!" he cried, then he gripped Jackson's arm in a vise-like grip, and rejoined:

"Fate has played this into our hands. We must not let that villain escape."

"Jericho! you're right!" whispered the cowboy. "But how will we trap him?"

"Go back to the Horse and bring Barney and Pomp."

"All right!"

Jackson glided away.

No sooner had he gone than Frank was delighted as well as surprised to see four of the six men mount horses and gallop away over the plains upon some errand.

They were quickly out of sight and hearing. Surely fate was playing the game into Frank's hands.

"Now for success!" whispered the young inventor.

Only one man was left with Darke. They were vainly trying to get into the treasure chest.

Every word they uttered came plainly to Frank's hearing.

"Curse it!" gritted the train robber. "Won't it yield, Jim?"

"It won't cap'en."

"I wish I had a bit of dynamite."

"Why not try powder?"

"All right; I will."

But at this moment Jackson returned with Barney and Pomp.

"Here we are, pard," whispered the cowboy, shrilly.

"All right," replied Frank. "Keep steady all now and do just what I say. Keep close to me, and draw a bead on those two wretches with your Winchesters!"

Then Frank covered Darke with his own rifle, and boldly stepped out into view.

"Hands up, Duncan Darke!" he commanded, in a sharp, stern voice.

Like a flash the villain wheeled.

His hand went instinctively to his pistol belt.

But he saw four rifles covering him and his companion. It was a most persuasive argument.

"Hands up!"

There was no disobeying the order.

With a baffled curse, the train robber obeyed.

"Bind them both, Pomp," ordered Frank. "Be lively!"

"Curse ye!" gritted Darke. "Where did ye cum from so sudden?"

"We have been on your track for a good while," replied Frank, coolly.

A gleam of recognition emanated from the villain's eyes.

"Thunder an' blazes!" he ejaculated. "It's that Frank Reade, Jr., the covey that owns the Steam Hoss!"

"That is just who it is!" cried Frank. "I suppose you are not pleased to make my acquaintance in this manner?"

The villain sullenly submitted to having his hands bound behind him.

"The game is up!" he muttered. "I cave. All my men were cut to pieces by the Comanches. I had thought I could git away with the

million an' find safe quarters in some foreign land, but 'tain't no use. I'm beat."

"That's correct, friend!" cried Bill Jackson, forcibly. "An' ye're doing the graceful thing."

Both of the train robbers were now bound securely.

Barney and Pomp had lifted the treasure chest into the wagon.

"What'll we do with these two chaps, pard?" asked Jackson, dubiously. "Thar ain't room in the waggin for 'em both."

Frank saw that this was true.

He hesitated a moment and then said:

"I have it. We have got the man we want and that is Darke. Cut this other fellow's bonds and let him cut sticks. We don't care for him."

"Correct!" cried Jackson. "We don't care a cent for him."

The cowboy cut the fellow's bonds, and said:

"Now then, make yerself scarce. It's luck fer you, Judge Lynch ain't holdin' his court hereabouts this morning."

The fellow said nothing, but he looked his ineffable joy at the release.

He quickly slunk away into the gloom. Then Darke was placed in the wagon and his captors also climbed in.

The Steam Horse was given head and struck out for the south.

All that night this course was held across the level plains.

The next morning the party halted upon the banks of a small stream in the verge of an alkali tract.

Frank consulted a machine of his invention for recording distance and said:

"We are one hundred miles from our stopping place of last night."

This brought forth a hearty cheer.

"Good enough!" cried Jackson. "We ought to make the Texas line in two days more."

"I think we will," said Frank, confidently. "And three days more and we will be at Hard Pan."

The spirits of all were high with the exception perhaps of Duncan Darke.

The villain was sullen and defiant at first.

But now he began to wax moody and downcast. At a favorable opportunity he addressed Frank.

"Look here, Mr. Reade," he said, in a pleading voice. "I know you ain't the sort of a chap to take unfair advantage of anybody."

"No," replied Frank, "I never intend to do that."

"Then ye'll be fair with me?"

"I mean to."

"If ye take me up to Hard Pan they will lynch me."

"Well, what of that. Don't you deserve it?"

"Mebbe, but I haven't any desire that way."

"Well, what can I do to help it?"

"Jest let me go. I'll swear never to cross yer path agin nor that of any of your friends. I'll do any favor for ye. My life ain't nothin' to you an' it's a heap to me. Jest let me go."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

FRANK gazed hard at the outlaw.

"Suppose I was in your clutches," he asked, "what would you do?"

"I reckon I'd let you off under these circumstances."

"I don't believe it," said Frank, with positive conviction. "I remember that Mr. Jackson and myself here were in the power of your men and they meant to make us walk over the cliff to an awful death."

"But I mean to turn over a new leaf," pleaded the villain.

"I don't believe it."

"I swear it! Why should you hold me? You've got the money back and you can clear young Mayhew."

But Frank would not listen to the wretch's appeal.

"You are a murderer," he replied. "Hundreds of innocent lives have been taken by you in your train wrecking career. It is but right that you should expiate your crimes."

The villain thereupon showered bitter curses upon his captor.

Whatever compassion Frank had held for his prisoner vanished then.

The days passed rapidly.

The Steam Horse made a magnificent run across the long plains. Several times the fuel gave out, but each time a fresh mine of coal was found to replenish it.

One morning the Horse ran alongside a railroad track.

It was the line of the M. N. & T. In a short while a guide board was seen which said:

"Hard Pan, 40 miles."

"In one hour!" cried Frank. "If the plain is as smooth as this all the way we will come in sight of the town."

The young inventor's prediction proved correct.

At the expiration of an hour the small city of Hard Pan came into view.

Men on horseback and afoot, wagons and prairie schooners, all the evidences of civilization in a new country now became visible. Down into the main street of the town ran the Steam Horse.

Its appearance created a furore.

In a jiffy the entire town was out and thronging the streets.

Not a man, woman or child in Hard Pan, but was aware that the wonderful Steam Horse had been for a long time on the trail of Dun-can Darke and in quest of the stolen million.

The appearance of the Horse, therefore, created a mighty excitement.

Frank went at once to the office of the Texas Express Co. The officials came out in great delight, and Frank was literally overwhelmed with their gratitude, when they learned that the million dollars was recovered.

In a jiffy an armed guard was stationed about the express office. The treasure chest was delivered up to the express company. Then the city marshal appeared with a posse and took Darke into custody.

The little town was in a whirl of excitement.

That night Darke made a full confession clearing Mayhew. The ex-clerk was released and joined his delighted friends.

Frank Reade, Jr., and the Steam Horse were given an ovation in Hard Pan.

They owned the town for the next twenty-four hours. Jackson was in hilarious spirits, and with Mayhew came down to meet Frank before he left the city.

"I shall not go back on the range, Mr. Reade!" he said. "For this reason!"

The cowboy removed his sombrero and took off a wig and then removed his mustache.

"Dan Burton, the detective," gasped Frank.

"It is," replied the pseudo cowboy, with an uproarious laugh. "If you remember I told you that I would see you in the Far West."

"Well," said Frank, "you played your part well."

A few days later the Steam Horse was packed in sections and shipped home to Readestown.

"FRANK READE, JR., WITH HIS NEW STEAM HORSE AMONG THE COWBOYS; OR, THE LEAGUE OF THE PLAINS."

The wonderful search for a Million Dollars was over and had been successful.

A tremendous crowd was at the station to see the voyagers off on the train.

"Golly!" muttered Pomp, "I done fink dey tinks us de Prince ob Wales."

"Bejabers yez luk loike his Majesty!" exclaimed Barney derisively. "Mebbe ye're his brother."

"Don yo' say nuffin', Iish," retorted Pomp, "dey done take yo' fo' de great Barnum's what-is-it, monkey or man?"

"Begorra, I'll break yer jaw for that," roared Barney.

A lively scrap between the two was prevented by the trains starting at that moment.

Out of Hard Pan, they rolled amid the cheers of the populace. The long journey home was begun.

One fine morning they arrived in Readestown, all safe and well.

The Steam Horse was unloaded from the cars and stored away for future use. And Fate had destined that this day should not be far distant.

The search for a million dollars had been a most successful trip. The frinds of the party in Readestown, received them effusively and joyfully.

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